

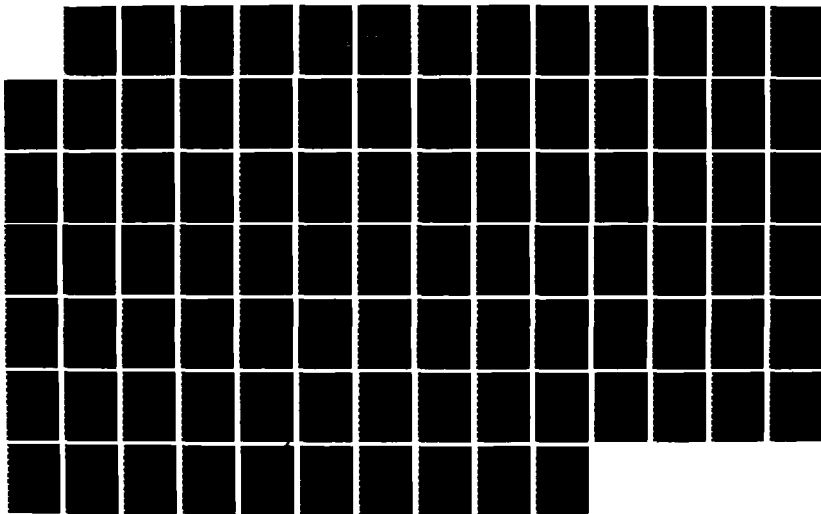
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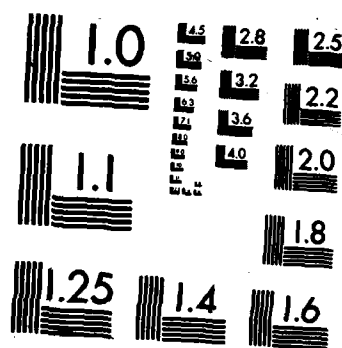
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An Analysis of
Manstein's Winter Campaign
on the Russian Front, 1942-43

A Perspective of the Operational Level of War
and Its Implications

A paper presented to the Director, School of
Advanced Military Studies in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the
Advanced Operations Studies Fellowship

by

Lawrence L. Izzo, LTC, USA
B.S., United States Military Academy, 1967
M.S.N.E., Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1971
M.B.A., Long Island University, 1978

Fort Leavenworth, Kansas
1986

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The study concludes with the implications of the lessons learned for a NATO-Soviet conflict in a central European scenario. The study points out that Manstein demonstrated that victory is possible even when forced to react to the enemy's plan. The ability of NATO to replicate, today, the agility of Manstein's forces and the synchronization achieved by his commanders is questioned. The implications of NATO's lack of operational depth, in contrast to Manstein, are described. The impact of changes in force design since World War II are also explained.

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The lessons learned from the campaign provide a perspective of battle at the operational level of war. The factors leading to Manstein's success are discussed and include: superior generalship at the operational level; superior tactical maturity of the Germans; and German tactical and operational agility. The study describes the transition from the operational defensive to the operational offensive and how a defender can have the initiative. Manstein's use of depth is explained. The concepts of center of gravity and operational art as they pertain to this campaign are also described.

The study concludes with the implications of the lessons learned for a NATO-Soviet conflict in a central European scenario. The study points out that Manstein demonstrated that victory is possible even when forced to react to the enemy's plan. The ability of NATO to replicate, today, the agility of Manstein's forces and the synchronization achieved by his commanders is questioned. The implications of NATO's lack of operational depth, in contrast to Manstein, are described. The impact of changes in force design since World War II are also explained.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Manstein's Campaign

The winter campaign conducted by Field Marshal Erich von Manstein on the Russian southern front was one of the most brilliant of World War II. It is a classic example of the art of war practised at the operational level; specifically, it demonstrates the use of the mobile defense to wrest the operational initiative from an enemy vastly superior in numerical strength. The campaign can be thought of as beginning with the encirclement of the German 6th Army in Stalingrad in late November, 1942, and ending three months later with the Germans recapturing Kharkov, the 4th largest city in the Soviet Union.

Because the campaign is wedged between two significant German defeats of strategic importance, Stalingrad and Kursk, it has been overshadowed and not received the attention it deserves. But an analysis of this campaign has applicability today for several reasons. First, the principal actor, Field Marshal Erich von Manstein, is considered an operational genius, possibly Germany's best.¹ He played a significant role in developing the German plan of attack through the Ardennes in 1940 which led to the total collapse of France. He won his marshalship with a brilliant campaign in the Crimea in 1941. An analysis of this campaign will demonstrate the finest example of leadership at the operational level.

Second, the campaign is a good example of the operational level of war. The southern flank of the Russian front can be considered a theater of operations by itself, and this campaign represents a series of significant

military operations with the ultimate strategic goal of retaining the Donetz Basin, a region of southern Russian thought to have strategic and economic importance by Hitler.

Third, this campaign replicates some of the very conditions we face in NATO today. Manstein found himself initially on both the strategic and operational defensive. German forces along the entire southern front were heavily outnumbered in men and armor. Manstein had to cope with political constraints; e.g., Hitler's insistence on holding onto all occupied territory. This exacerbated Manstein's problems since it restricted his operational maneuver. And Manstein had to deal with an allied army; by the end of the winter he would have Rumanians, Italians and Hungarians under his command.

Fourth, and maybe most important, this campaign offers an excellent example of the transition from the defense to the offense. Ever since Clausewitz said that "the defensive form of warfare is intrinsically stronger than the offensive,"² some have found this difficult to reconcile with the more natural predisposition to attack. But Clausewitz also said that you should wage a defensive campaign with offensive battles³ and this campaign clearly shows how Manstein parried the Soviet attacks, used the tactical offense whenever opportunity for counterattacks arose and through the cumulative effect regained the operational initiative. Hence the more important question, rather than which form of warfare is strongest, is how do you effectively transition from one to the other.

This paper will first present a review of Manstein's winter campaign. It will then analyze the lessons learned from the campaign, focusing on why Manstein was successful and the Soviets were not. It concludes with a study of the implications of those lessons learned as applied to the tenets of Airland Battle Doctrine in a current NATO environment.

German Operational Overview

As German Army Group South advanced east through the Ukraine during the summer of 1942, its attack began to diverge. Two separate Army Groups were formed; Army Group A, which turned south and attacked through the Caucasus with 2 German armies and Army Group B, which attacked on a broad front towards the Don and Stalingrad on the Volga. The entire southern front became overextended, (this was to become a characteristic of both Soviet and German operations) and offered the Soviets an opportunity to launch their winter counteroffensive. Initiated on 19 November 1942, it had already achieved the encirclement of over 200,000 German soldiers in Stalingrad by the time Manstein was moved from the Leningrad front to assume command of the newly formed Army Group Don on 24 November 1942 and to tie together Army Groups B and A. Under his command he was given the German 6th Army in Stalingrad, 4th Panzer Army and Rumanian Third and Fourth Armies. Manstein quickly realized the crisis he faced represented a decisive campaign and that "The issue was no longer the fate of a single Army but of the entire southern wing of the front and ultimately of all the German armies in the east."⁴ The overextended German front formed a wide arc curving far to the east to Stalingrad. Its southern boundary in the Caucasus touched the Black Sea on the west and ran east towards the Caspian Sea while facing south. In effect there were two huge salients, one stretching south into the Caucasus and one east into Stalingrad. These salients provided the Soviets an opportunity to cut off several German armies and inflict a decisive defeat even more significant than Stalingrad.

Overview of the Russian Front
(from: Ziemke, *Stalingrad to Berlin*)

THE SITUATION
1 May and 19 November 1942

— FRONT LINE, 1 MAY
— FRONT LINE, 19 NOV

50 0 50 100 MILES
50 0 50 100 KILOMETERS

BLACK SEA

--- FRONT LINE, 1 MAY
 = FRONT LINE, 18 NOV

B L A C K
S E A

The German lines of communications (LOC) for the entire southern wing of the eastern front crossed the Dnepr River at Dnepropetrovsk and Zaporozhye. These two crossings were about 440 miles from Stalingrad and 560 miles from the eastern wing of the Caucasus front; yet they were only 260 miles from the enemy on the Don. The LOC for Army Group A and the right wing of Army Group B also ran through Rostov. This fragile link to the Caucasus was 375 miles to Army Group A's east wing and even 250 miles to the 4th Panzer Army which was to make the main effort for the relief of Stalingrad. But again, it was only 185 miles to the enemy bridgehead on the Don where the Rumanians had already been overrun on 19 November.⁵ Manstein could comparatively recall how his armor corps in the opening days of Barbarosa in June 1941 had covered 170 miles against relatively stronger opposition in only 4 days!

It did not take Manstein long to grasp the gravity of the situation. As one of his contemporaries later put it, "It may well be said that this was the most difficult mission given to a general in the course of the war."⁶ It was to his credit that he had a vision appropriate for the task at hand. The mission given to him by Hitler was to relieve the 6th Army in Stalingrad, bring the enemy attack to a halt and recapture lost territory.⁷ This was a short sighted view. Manstein realized the decisive operational opportunity facing the Soviets, principally because of their numerical superiority across the front and the fact that they were closer than his own forces to the vital links on the Dneper and at Rostov. Therefore, Manstein envisioned the campaign sequenced into four required phases:⁸

- (1) Relief of 6th Army.
- (2) Keep the rear of Army Group A free while it disengaged from the Caucasus.
- (3) Prevent the German lines of communications to the southern wing from being "tied off".
- (4) Deliver a counterblow to the enemy and regain the initiative.

To control the forces of his Army Group, Manstein used the 4th Panzer Army as his right wing and the Rumanian Third Army on his left. On 5 December he formed Army Detachment (AD) Hollidt to control most of the scattered and reinforcing German units.⁹ An Army Detachment, or Armeeabteilung in German, was a temporary command established to control two or more corps and did not have the full staff of an Army Headquarters.

Manstein's vision of the campaign, however, was not the same vision as Hitler's. Hitler would exacerbate Manstein's challenges by insisting on holding rigidly onto all territorial gains; and initially he would allow no withdrawal of forces from the Caucasus region.

Soviet Operational Overview

Overlaid against this vision by Manstein of the conduct of the campaign was a series of vast Soviet operations. Stalin controlled these operations through the staff of the High Command of the Soviet Armed Forces (STAVKA) and STAVKA representatives at the various Fronts. The Fronts that would play a role in this campaign were, from north to south: Bryansk Front commanded by General Reuter; Voronezh Front commanded by General Golikov; Southwest Front commanded by General Vatutin; Don Front commanded by General Rokossovski; and the Stalingrad (later South) Front commanded by General Yeremenko. The reduction of the Stalingrad pocket was first priority. Codenamed RING, this operation would be conducted in stages by the Stalingrad and Don Fronts. Almost simultaneously, the Soviets would launch Operation SATURN on 10 December 1942. This plan, approved on 2 December, would use the Southwest and Voronezh Fronts to crush the Italian 8th Army and Army Detachment (AD) Hollidt. This would also relieve German pressure expected to come to the aid of 6th Army in Stalingrad. In this operation's second phase, the Southwest

Front would drive towards Rostov to cut off German forces in the Caucasus.¹⁰ Both these operations achieved limited success in December.

In January, 1943, the Soviets continued their counteroffensive hoping to produce a total collapse of German forces in Russia by first destroying the southern wing. The Voronezh Front launched an offensive against the Hungarian 2d Army and remnants of the Italian 8th Army along the upper Don. At the same time the Southwest Front drove towards the Donetz. To the south, the South Front pushed towards Rostov and in the Caucasus other Soviet forces pressured Army Group A. In late January the Bryansk and Voronezh Fronts attempted to encircle the 2nd German Army of Army Group B, forcing it to withdraw with many units surrounded. Soviet successes led STAVKA to overestimate its capabilities and in January it optimistically approved two plans, GALLOP and STAR. In GALLOP, the Southwest Front, beginning 29 January, would drive from Stavobelsk deep into the rear of Army Group Don on towards Stalino and Mariupol on the Sea of Azov and also for the Dnepr crossings at Zaporozhye. On 1 February, the Voronezh Front would launch Operation STAR to recapture Belgorod, Kharkov and Kursk and generally push the left flank of the southern German wing back westwards. The South Front would support by destroying German forces vicinity of Rostov and attacking along the north coast of the Sea of Azov. Other supporting offenses were to be conducted simultaneously at Leningrad, in the Caucasus, and against the Demyansk pocket. These ambitious operations were based on Soviet estimates that the entire right wing of the German Army in south Russia was near total collapse as the result of the encirclement at Stalingrad and the continuous fighting of December 1942 and January 1943. The strategic goal was to encircle the southern armies before they could withdraw back across the Dnepr, thus inflicting just the decisive defeat that Manstein feared.¹¹

This, then, completes the broad overview of the situation Manstein found on the German southern wing, and the general concept of operations the Soviets would use to exploit that situation. Before describing the actual phases of the campaign, it will be useful to review Manstein's style of command and contrast it with that of his boss, Adolf Hitler.

Chapter 2

Manstein's vs Hitler's View of Operational Art

Manstein envisioned a mobile type defense for the southern wing. He believed his staffs and subordinate units had an advantage in operational mobility over the enemy.¹² In FM 100-5, we call this concept "agility", for what Manstein was referring to was the German ability to read the battlefield and react to its circumstances faster than the enemy. The German mechanized Panzer forces, the excellent German staffs, and the initiative demonstrated by German officers at all levels each contributed to this agility. However, in Manstein's view, he attributed the German success to two principles of leadership:¹³

- (1) Always conduct operations elastically and resourcefully;
- (2) Give every possible scope to the initiative and self-sufficiency of commanders at all levels.

Contrary to the perception that the Prussian system of war fostered a "blind obedience" mentality in its officer corps, Manstein took pride that something in the Germanic heritage fostered an individuality on the part of commanders in battle. Coupled with a predisposition to assume risks, this enabled German units to exploit the opportunities inherent in mechanized warfare and fluid operations.

It is interesting to note that Manstein recognized that his ability to grant independence to subordinate commanders was possible to a large degree because there existed throughout the German military hierarchy "a consistency of outlook" and the presupposition that "all members of the military hierarchy are imbued with certain tactical or operational axioms," produced by the school of the German General Staff.¹⁴ It is just this type of similar

cultural bias in terms of thinking of operational art which is the rejuvenated goal of the new operations manual, FM 100-5, and the Army's School of Advanced Military Studies at Fort Leavenworth.

On the other hand, Hitler's practise of exercising command and control was much different than Manstein's. Hitler had, over several years, assumed the principal role in directing military operations. This evolution began in 1938 when Hitler abolished the War Ministry and became Commander in Chief, German Armed Forces. After the 1941 offensive in Russia bogged down in December, Hitler forced General von Brauchitsch, Commander in Chief, German Army, to retire and assumed the role himself. In September 1942 he replaced General Halder, the Chief of Staff of the Army High Command (Oberkommando der Heeres (OKH)), with General Zeitzler, a much junior general. As a result, Hitler took charge of operations on the eastern front in more and more detail, meddling in the day to day operations of subordinate units and thus stifling initiative.

Hitler had an inherent distrust of the German General Staff and this slowly grew into contempt. This dated from the doubts the General Staff had shown to most of Hitler's early plans and ambitions, from the Sudetenland through the invasion of France and Poland. His successes only fueled his confidence in himself, rather than in them. This was reinforced during the winter of 1941-42 when Hitler ignored his advisers and insisted on a fanatical resistance throughout the Russian winter all along the front. He would allow no major withdrawal and ordered all territory held. This worked and may have saved the German Army from a catastrophic, Napoleon like retreat. However, it worked for the wrong reasons. In December of 1941 the German Army had made no preparations for a winter withdrawal; no positions had been prepared towards the rear; and with the frozen ground hardly any could be built. Had they begun a major withdrawal, they may well have lost their cohesion and suffered

a major collapse. But this convinced Hitler that there was no need to voluntarily give up ground to the Soviets and he planned the same strategy for the winter of 1942.

In October, 1942, Hitler issued Operations Order #1, providing overall guidance for the upcoming winter. Again there would be no flexibility; no room for maneuver; no allowance for initiative by his Army commanders. In it he ordered all winter positions held at all costs; no withdrawals were allowed; encircled forces were to stay put until relieved. He made every commander, down to squad level, personally responsible to him for the execution of these orders.¹⁵ This doctrine reflected both a lack of trust in his subordinates and also a failure to appreciate the value of initiative at the lowest levels. Most importantly, it contrasted with Manstein's vision of how he needed to fight and almost cost the Germans the campaign.

Having reviewed the handicaps Manstein was to work with, we will now proceed through each phase of the campaign.

Chapter 3

Phase 1: Operation WINTERGEWITTER ("Winter Gale")

Although the focus of this paper does not include a detailed discussion of the German errors leading to the total annihilation of the 6th Army in Stalingrad, a brief summary will suffice for the overall perspective of the winter campaign. After the initial paralysis at OKH caused by the Soviet encirclement of Stalingrad had worn off, Hitler instructed Paulus not to break out and to hold fast. Paulus had requested freedom of action and would have preferred to attempt a breakout. Some have criticized him for not seizing the opportunity either before Hitler ordered him not to or in spite of the order.¹⁶ Paulus was urged by his generals to abandon the city. General Zeitler tried desperately to get Hitler to agree to a withdrawal from the Volga back behind the bend in the Don. Manstein also felt that an attempt to hold out was dangerous; that relief couldn't begin until early December and then only if reinforcements materialized as promised. Hitler promised Manstein reinforcements of 6 infantry and 4 panzer divisions, plus other supporting units; however, only two infantry division were immediately available.¹⁷ When Goering assured Hitler that he could resupply the 6th Army by air and promised a daily delivery of 600 tons, Hitler made up his mind and insisted that all units adhere to the philosophy of Operation Order 1: absolutely not one step back.¹⁸ In Hitler's view, to retreat from Stalingrad would be to give up the decisive gains of the entire 1942 campaign and Stalingrad would entail much greater costs to retake in 1943.¹⁹

Required, therefore, to relieve Stalingrad, Manstein designated 4th Panzer Army as the main effort. It would attack on the east side of the Don, in a northeast direction from the vicinity of Kotelnikovo. Its principal force was the 57th Panzer Corps consisting of the 6th and 23rd Panzer Divisions (and

later the 17th Panzer Division). The 57th would be supported by the 48th Panzer Corps, located on the west side of the Don. It would launch its attack across the Don in support of the 57th's attack when the latter's advance reached an appropriate point. The eastern flank of the 4th Army was to be covered by the 16th Motorized Division of Army Group A and a Rumanian Corps. Manstein planned to start the operation, codenamed WINTERGEWITTER, on 8 December and he instructed Paulus to be prepared to strike towards the southwest to help link up.²⁰ But now the Soviets launched their operations RING and SATURN. Attacks against Stalingrad the first week of December kept the German divisions along the southwestern portion of the pocket on the defensive and wore them down. Then the Soviets attacked along the Chir River, against the Rumanian 3rd Army which was linking together the 48th and 57th Corps. Again the Soviets were exploiting German allies. Manstein was forced to commit the 48th Panzer Corps to stem these attacks, preventing this corps from supporting the main thrust towards Stalingrad as planned. In effect, by 9 December, WINTERGEWITTER was reduced to a two division operation. It was further delayed until 12 December by freezing weather and the late arrival of reinforcements expected by Manstein.²¹

Not only did Hitler want to hold the Stalingrad pocket, but he also envisioned Army Group B pushing the front from the Chir back to the Don. He therefore ordered one of Manstein's reinforcing units, the 17th Panzer Division, positioned on the left flank of Army Group Don in order to hold the pressure against the Italian 8th Army and to facilitate the eventual German counterattack. Both Zeidler and Manstein wanted the 17th to reinforce WINTERGEWITTER.²²

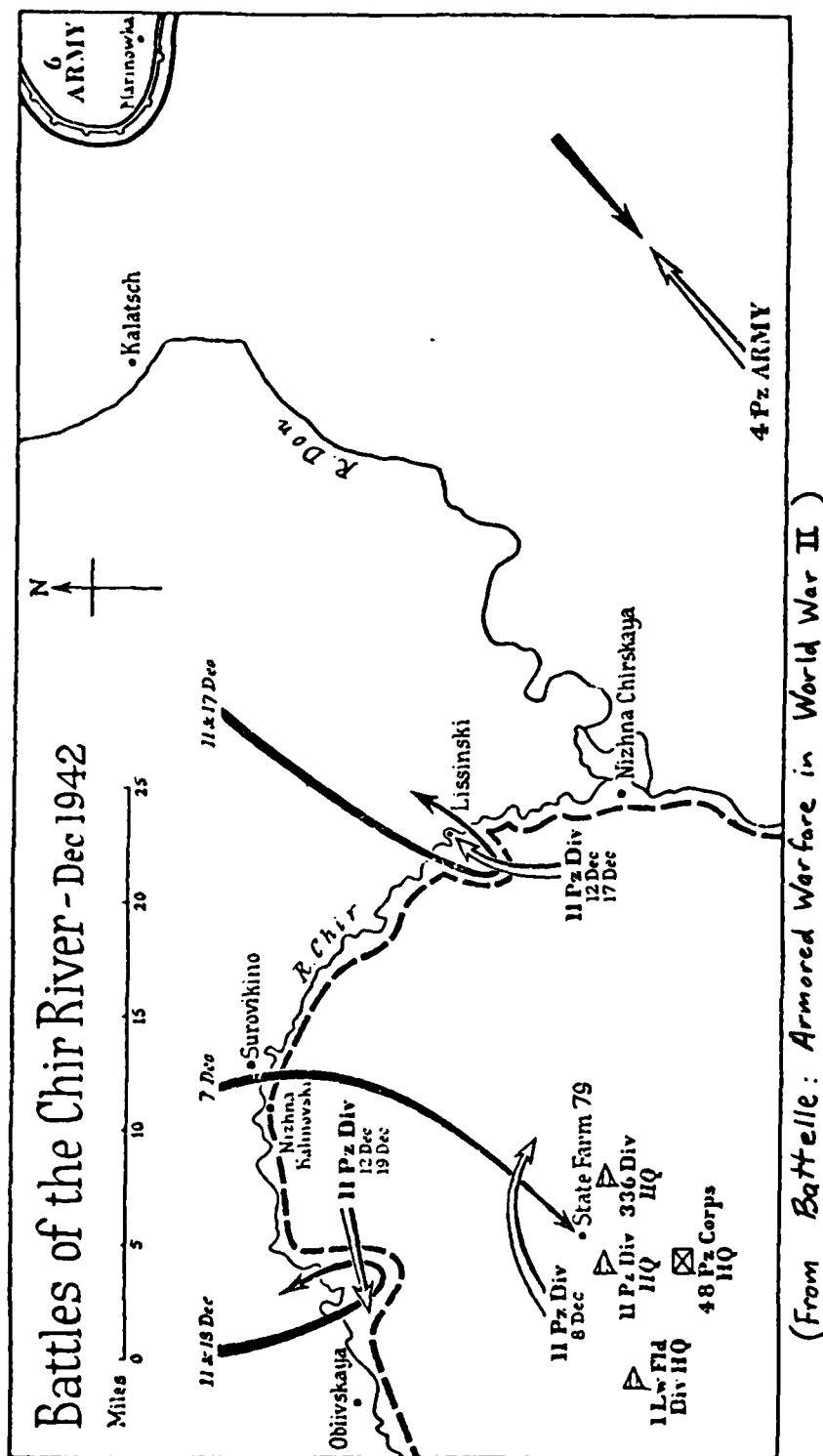
On 14 December, the 5th Tank and 5th Shock Armies were attacking to the west of Stalingrad and giving 48th Panzer Corps all it could handle. The 57th was making slow progress; Paulus was getting only 70 tons per day and not the

600 tons promised by Goering and the situation was obviously getting worse. Manstein asked Hitler for the 16th Motorized Infantry Division, then on his right flank but in Army Group A. Hitler refused, not wanting to initiate any actions which could precipitate a withdrawal from the Caucasus. Manstein persisted in reference to the 17th and 16th reinforcements, insisting that the Germans could in no way launch an offensive back to the Don before mid January at the earliest and in any case, WINTERGEWITTER had to be considered first priority. Hitler relented and gave Manstein the 17th but not the 16th.²³

The 57th Panzer Corps, reinforced with the 17th, made better progress during the next few days. By the 19th it had driven to within 35 miles of the pocket. Manstein did not think they could push further and he ordered Paulus to be prepared to break out to the southwest. Truck convoys with 2000 tons of supplies were moving behind 57th Corps, ready to supply 6th Army as soon as the linkup was made. But Manstein and Paulus still needed Hitler's approval for a breakout attempt and Hitler never came close to making that decision. He did provide a SS Division from Army Group A to Manstein as reinforcement, but he did not consent to an evacuation of Stalingrad. He used a report from Paulus that 6th Army only had fuel for 12 miles as an excuse to stand firm with his earlier instructions. Whether 6th Army could have effected a linkup if they attempted a breakout is questionable; what is unquestionable is only its ultimate fate of total annihilation, given the sparseness of its resupply results. Thus, after the 19th of December its chances for survival decreased daily. That day marked the closest that operation WINTERGEWITTER would come to succeeding.

Battles on the Chir River

As indicated, Soviet attacks along the Chir River at the beginning of December by the 5th Tank Army as part of Operation Saturn disrupted Manstein's plan to use the 48th Panzer Corps as a supporting attack for the 57th.



However, the actions of the 48th Corps in dealing with this crisis are an excellent example in microcosm of the mobile defense used by Manstein and therefore are useful to review in some detail. The 48th Panzer Corps consisted of the 336th Infantry Division, the 7th Luftwaffe Field Division,²⁴ and the 11th Panzer Division commanded by General Balck. The Corps Chief of Staff was General von Mellenthin. The 48th Corps used the 336th and 7th to defend along the river and the 11th Division as a mobile reserve, located to the rear of the infantry. On 7 December the Russian 1st Armored Corps²⁵ crossed the Chir and was driving south, far to the rear of German river defenses. The 11th was ordered to defeat this threat. After meeting and stemming the Soviet advance on 7 December, Balck regrouped his forces that night to avoid having to make a frontal attack. At dawn on 8 December he used a Panzergrenadier Regiment for a holding attack from the southwest, placed his antiaircraft guns and engineer battalion as a blocking force to the Russian southeast and attacked the Soviets well in the rear with a Panzer Regiment. Taking them completely by surprise, the Panzer Regiment first wiped out a long column of motorized infantry caught coming from the north, then turned on the rear of the Soviet armor catching them in a vice with the Panzergrenadiers. Fifty-three Soviet tanks were knocked out and the Soviet Armored Corps was defeated. Small tactical victories of this sort were typical for the Germans throughout the bleak days of December, January, and February, and had a cumulative effect in wresting the operational initiative away from the Soviets. The essential ingredient was the concentration of scarce German armor into a mobile reserve which was used to destroy Soviet penetrations in a piecemeal fashion; this exploited Auftragstaktik and German tactical skills to their utmost.²⁶

The 11th continued to be used as a "fire brigade", destroying one Soviet penetration after another. Soviets broke through the 336th's river defenses at two locations about 15 miles apart on 11 December. After a night march, the 11th destroyed one force at dawn on the 12th, then marched against the other Soviet bridgehead, compressing it that same day. On the 13th as it was about to attempt to destroy this bridgehead completely, another threat broke out on its flank. Again turning, it dealt this force a knock out punch and then returned to attack the bridgehead. Before it could eliminate this bridgehead it was ordered to move into a new position to cross the Don and support WINTERGEWITTER. As it did so on the 15th and 16th, the Soviets launched their offensive against the Italian 8th Army and Army Detachment Hollidt, on the 48th's left flank, and also against the 48th itself on the Chir. On the 17th, the 11th drove one more Soviet penetration of the 336th back to the river. On the 18th, Mellenthin told Balck of a Soviet armored corps which had made a deep penetration of the Luftwaffe Division about 12 miles to his northwest. Balck moved his regiments at night and fell on the Soviets, again at dawn, using one infantry regiment as a blocking force and the other to protect the exposed flank of his Panzer Regiment as it attacked into the enemy rear. Balck attacked two separate armor columns in sequence, destroying them piecemeal and inflicted 65 tank losses while sustaining none to his own 25 tanks. Balck continued to use the few tanks of his division as a mobile reserve for the Corps until the 11th Division was ordered on 22 December to move to Tatsinskaya, 90 miles to the west to handle a new threat--the possible loss of Rostov.²⁷

Operation SATURN

Soviet plans to exploit the initial success of the encirclement of Stalingrad included two new operations, RING and SATURN. RING was the plan to reduce the Stalingrad pocket in phases by the Don and Stalingrad fronts. The

Southwest Front would conduct SATURN, a plan which, in its first phase, envisioned the destruction of the Italian 8th Army and Army Detachment Hollidt along a 150 mile front of the Don and Chir rivers. In its 2d phase, the front's 2nd echelon would exploit towards Rostov, capturing that city with the strategic objective of thus trapping the remnants of Army Group Don and Army Group A in the Caucasus, just as Manstein feared.

However, several factors contributed to a reduction in the scope of the operation before it commenced. First, initial attacks against the Stalingrad pocket convinced STAVKA that it needed to reinforce RING with 2d Guards Army from Southwest Front's 2d echelon. The 48th Panzer Corp's successes along the Chir against the 5th Tank Army's attacks and the drive of the 57th Corps towards Stalingrad added to STAVKA's concerns so that finally, over Vatutin's strong objections, STAVKA on 14 December ordered him to comply with the guidance for a reduced scale operation termed LITTLE SATURN.

Southwest Front was now to destroy the Italian 8th Army and Army Detachment Hollidt with a shallower envelopment. After the penetration phases, mobile tank forces would strike into the enemy rear, but instead of heading southwest, would turn southeast and run parallel to the front. It was envisioned that the offense would terminate well short of the critical Rostov, leaving that objective for future operations.²⁸ The operation commenced on 16 December and achieved significant success against the Italian 8th Army and Rumanian forces on Manstein's left flank. In four days the Soviets had opened up a 100 mile gap in the German front and were exploiting towards Millerovo and the Donetz crossings. This was well to the rear of Army Group Don, now still fighting on the Chir with the 57th Corps even further to the east moving towards Stalingrad. Despite the reduced objectives of the operation, it presented Manstein with a tremendous threat. The collapse of the allies on his left flank meant his flank and rear were exposed and there were few German

forces between the Soviets and Rostov. First priority for Manstein therefore began to shift from the relief of 6th Army to the more critical issue of maintaining the entire southern wing of the Eastern Front.²⁹

OKH now established Army Detachment Fretter-Pico with remnants of several divisions and gave it the mission of protecting the bridges on the Donets near Voroshilovgrad and tying in with Army Group Don. But even so, Manstein was forced to shift the 11th Division and HQs, 48th Panzer Corps west from the Chir to deal with the threat towards the Donets crossings and Tatsinskaya, one of the primary airfields used for the 6th Army airlift. He was also forced to shift one of the 57th Corp's three divisions west. This occurred about the same time that the Soviets shifted the 2nd Guards Army from the Stalingrad front southward to reinforce the effort against the 57th and all but sealed the doom of 6th Army and the end of WINTERGEWITTER. If a three division effort couldn't effect a linkup with 6th Army, a two division effort against a reinforced enemy, with no hope of support from the 48th Corps certainly could not. The 57th Corps shifted to the defense; Hitler insisted it remain in a forward position to facilitate resumption of the advance at a later date, an event which would never occur.³⁰

The Loss and Recapture of Tatsinskaya

The battles for the airfield at Tatsinskaya are interesting to review because they provide an excellent example of the state of Soviet operational art at this time. The 24th Tank Corps commanded by General Badanov, as part of 1st Guards Army and during the exploitation phase of LITTLE SATURN, had conducted a deep attack into the German rear. On 24 December in a surprise attack it captured the airfield and supply center at Tatsinskaya. Unfortunately for Badanov, he was out of supporting distance from the rest of 1st Guards Army.

The Germans reacted quickly and placed an ad hoc group formed from supply units on Badanov's rear, cutting his LOC and blocking his withdrawal northward. The later arriving 6th Panzer Division from 57th Corps reinforced this effort and blocked Badanov to the west. Balck's 11th Division, just arrived from the Chir River battles, attacked from the east and northeast. An infantry division blocked the Soviets to the south. The 24th corps held out against German attacks until the 28th; finally remnants of the shattered Corps broke out on the 29th and made their way back to Soviet lines.

The example and mistakes of the 24th Tank Corps, renamed the 2d Guards Tank Corps, in honor of its heroic actions, would serve the Soviets in the development of its OMG doctrine.³¹ Stalin quickly chastised his front commanders to push tank corps along extended advances in pairs or more in order not to get isolated as did Badanov.³² Furthermore, to ensure their armor operated in strength, STAVKA approved a new TOE for a tank army which would appear the following summer. Other lessons learned were that a tank corps had to be followed quickly by mobile infantry; logistical support had to be properly planned because mobile forces ran out of fuel and had maintenance problems; and expected rates of advance of 40-80 kms/day were unrealistic and should be revised down to about 25-35 kms/day.³³

Summary

As December 1942 drew to a close, it was apparent that WINTERGEWITTER could not succeed. Manstein simply did not have the combat power necessary to force a linkup with 6th Army. Operation LITTLE SATURN, while not able to cut through to Rostov, had drawn the 48th Panzer Corps away from the main effort towards Stalingrad. Hitler would continue to hold out the hope of another future relief effort, but 6th Army would slowly wither away. Paulus himself surrendered on 31 January 1943; the last remnants of the pocket held out until 2 February. The only positive thing the Germans could look at (if indeed,

anything positive could be gleaned from the loss of a 200,000 man Army) was that the Stalingrad pocket tied up significant numbers of Soviet forces which otherwise would have been free to assist in the overall counteroffensive.

Chapter 4

Phase 2: Protecting the Rear of Army Group A

The disintegration of a large part of Army Group B's front in December represented a serious threat to both Army Groups Don and A. If the Soviets were strong enough to sustain the offensive, they could carry on towards the Donetsk River crossings vicinity Voroshilovgrad and from there proceed either west to the Dnepr crossings or south to Rostov. Either scenario represented the possible loss of critical choke points to the entire German southern wing. Even if the Soviets were less ambitious, which was actually the case in December, they could turn southeast and attack into AD Hollidt's flank, thus hitting Manstein in the rear.

Manstein's first preference in December, as it had been from the time he took command of Army Group Don, was to shorten the exaggerated fronts and thereby create some armor forces which could be used as a mobile reserve; then "leap frog" these forces to the west to protect his left flank, fill the gap between him and Army Group B, and protect his life lines across the Dnepr. The priority of first attempting the relief of 6th Army prevented him from executing this prudent course of action. As the situation deteriorated in December and the relief effort could be seen to be fruitless, he more than ever wanted to do this.³⁴ But now Hitler's obstinacy prevented any significant redeployment of forces.

The operational situation towards the end of December was therefore as follows: AD Fretter-Pico, vicinity Millerovo on the right flank of Army Group B, "stood like a solitary island amid the red flood."³⁵ It was questionable whether it could stem the flow on either of its flanks. Hence AD Hollidt's left flank was exposed and it had severe pressure to its front. 4th Panzer Army was separated from AD Hollidt by the Don and it was in jeopardy of being

encircled on either flank. Manstein expressed serious concerns to Zeitler on both 20 and 24 December about the possibility of losing both Army Group Don and A. In the 24th's conversation he concluded, "I ask that it be considered how the battle would develop if we commanded on the other side."³⁶

Finally, Hitler made a small compromise on 29 December and agreed to the reduction of the Caucasus salient.³⁷ He ordered the 1st Panzer Army to pull back so its front faced east, not south, and hence it could cooperate with the 4th Panzer Army on its left flank. But still Hitler refused to allow significant forces to be pulled completely back out of the Caucasus, as Manstein repeatedly requested, to be used at the decisive point. Hence the 'balcony', as Manstein called it, still hung out towards the east, ready to be cut off by the Soviets.

Therefore, for the 2nd phase of the campaign, Manstein saw his units having the following tasks:³⁸

- o Rather than redeploy to the left as he preferred, his Army Group had to fight for time.

- o 4th Panzer Army had to protect the rear of Army Group A as it pulled back from the mountains in the Caucasus to a more manageable front, and also had to prevent Soviet forces from outflanking it on its left and striking towards Rostov along the southern bank of the Don.

- o AD Hollidt had to prevent an encirclement of its right which would allow the enemy to strike towards Rostov along the northern bank of the Don from the east; and also prevent an encirclement on its left which would allow the enemy to strike Rostov from the north. If feasible, AD Hollidt was to do what it could, in coordination with AD Fretter-Pico, to prevent thrusts towards the Dnepr.

The priority in this phase, however, was clearly to prevent the loss of Rostov and hence the isolation of all German forces south of the Don. The problem was that the forces available were not sufficient to man a continuous line along the tremendous frontages presented. Therefore, Manstein kept his armored forces together and executed a mobile defense.

16 December 1942 - 19 January 1943

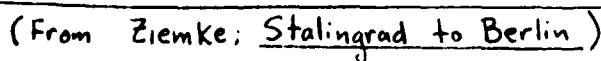
16 December 1942 - 19 January 1943

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***** GERMAN FRONT LINE, 10 JAN 1943



to Brewer, J.

4th Panzer Army's Mobile Defense

4th Panzer Army, consisting principally of the 57th Panzer Corps with two weakened divisions (17 and 23 Panzer), and some infantry, Luftwaffe and Security divisions,³⁹ was being pressured by three Soviet armies. The Soviets had reorganized and on 1 January the Stalingrad Front was renamed the South Front. After turning its three armies over to Don Front to continue the reduction of the 6th Army pocket, the South Front was given the 5th Shock, 2d Guards and 51st Armies with the mission of pushing towards Rostov on both sides of the Don.⁴⁰ The latter two armies, and later the 28th Army from the Caucasus region, would all combine to pressure the 4th Panzer Army on both flanks. Manstein correctly assumed that these three armies meant to not only pressure the 4th Panzer Army but to encircle it completely.⁴¹ He could only reinforce it with the SS Viking Division which had been released by Army Group A and later in mid-January, the 16th Motorized Division when it was finally released.

The 4th Panzer Army concentrated its armor forces and executed a mobile defense, just as the 48th Panzer Corps had done on the Chir River. In Manstein's words, "Fourth Panzer Army's object was not to offer inadequate resistance along an over-extended line, but to keep its forces close together. Only thus could it offer strong opposition at vital spots or deal the enemy a surprise blow whenever an opportunity presented itself."⁴² By so doing, it executed counterstrokes to the left and right, buying time for the 1st Panzer Army. In mid-January, after repeated requests by Manstein (in fact he offered to resign out of frustration on 5 January⁴³) Hitler authorized 4th Panzer Army to pull back to a line along the Manich Canal, facing north (see map). This further closed the gap between it and 1st Panzer Army.⁴⁴

The Struggle of Army Detachment Hollidt

North of the Don, AD Hollidt was also executing a frantic mobile defense. To defend its front of over 125 miles, AD Hollidt had four worn down infantry divisions, remnants of two Luftwaffe field divisions, and some miscellaneous troops such as antiaircraft units. For its concentrated strike force it used the 6th and 11th Panzer Divisions, later reinforced by the 7th Panzer when it was freed from Army Group A. With these two or three armored divisions, the Germans delivered one counterblow after another, striking at enemy forces in sequence on either flank. Manstein attributed AD Hollidt's ability to weather the incessant crises to the combination of its infantry holding its ground and its armor showing up at danger spots time and again.⁴⁵

Summary

By the middle of January there was beginning to be some coherence to the operational defense, yet Manstein still faced serious crises. But he had protected the rear of Army Group A as it reduced the size of the salient in the Caucasus, and it was now better tied in with his Army Group. He had kept open Rostov which served as the life line to Army Group A. AD Hollidt and 4th Panzer Army were fighting successful withdrawals and between 15 and 19 January gained the protection of the Donetz River and Manich Canal, respectively. On Manstein's left flank, AD Fretter-Pico, after getting 14,000 troops out of an encirclement vicinity Millerovo, also withdrew to the Donetz.⁴⁶ Manstein had thus far successfully fought for the time he needed.

Chapter 5

Phase 3: Keeping the LOCs Open

Soviet Operational Overview

It is useful now to review the development of Soviet operational plans after the completion of LITTLE SATURN. The Soviets continued their overall counteroffensive at the beginning of 1943 without a real pause. They continued to pressure the entire southern front hoping to attrit German forces and collapse the whole southern wing. At the same time the Soviets were reducing the Stalingrad pocket with Operation RING, the Voronezh Front conducted Operation Ostrogozh-Rossosh and quickly tore open huge gaps in Army Group B's front. Between 13 and 27 January, it destroyed the Hungarian 2d Army and the Italian Alpine Corps, completing the destruction of the Allied armies which had once formed the flanks for the German 6th Army. During this time, the Southwest Front was pushing towards the Donetz while the South Front pushed 4th Panzer Army back towards Rostov. A second new operation was launched on 24 January against the German 2d Army on the left flank of Army Group B by three armies of the Voronezh Front and the 13th Army of the Bryansk Front. This gained early success and 2d Army began to withdraw.⁴⁷

STAVKA now became very optimistic. It appeared as though the entire southern wing, Army Groups B, Don, and A, were executing a strategic withdrawal. Therefore, towards the end of January, STAVKA approved two very ambitious, large scale operations. If successful, they would achieve the operational objective of totally destroying the German southern wing and lead to the collapse of the German eastern front, the exact scenario Manstein had worried about since he assumed command of Army Group Don in November. These operations were called STAR and GALLOP.

Operation STAR

The Voronezh Front would conduct Operation STAR. Its goal was to free Kharkov and drive German Forces as far west as possible. Although the Voronezh Front had been in almost constant fighting for several months, the interpretation of the enemy situation was such that STAVKA and General Golikov, the front commander, believed the opportunities presented were worth the risk and planned to conduct the new offensive without a significant operational pause. It was also thought that a pause would give the Germans time to erect defenses. The Front was to attack towards the southwest and liberate Kharkov. As the Soviets experienced continued successes in January, STAVKA expanded the operation's scope before it started, and gave Golikov the additional objective of recapturing Kursk. This added over 100 kilometers to the Front's sector and required a divergence of effort towards the west and southwest; yet he received no new forces. STAR would commence on 2 February.⁴⁸

Golikov planned to attack towards Kursk with two armies and towards Kharkov with three. He had virtually no 2d echelon or operational reserves and his force totaled around 200,000 men and over 300 tanks. The intent was to advance rapidly and cross the Donetz before Germans had a chance to consolidate their defenses on the river and entrap as many Germans as possible. The depth of the advance was to be about 200 to 250 kilometers.⁴⁹

Opposing the Voronezh Front were the remnants of Army Group B. In this sector this represented principally AD Lanz of about 50,000 men, defending an overextended front over 100 miles wide.⁵⁰ While this was not yet in Manstein's sector, Army Group B was all there was to protect Manstein's left flank and rear, and the only opposition between the Soviets and the Dnepr crossings. However, Hitler's plan called for holding Kharkov and for this he

was counting on the arrival of the newly formed SS Panzer Corps, expected to close in the Kharkov area by mid February. Hitler placed great value in this Corps in that it would have the best new equipment, including Tiger tanks.

Operation GALLOP

Operation GALLOP would precede STAR by a day or two and was similarly ambitious. With Golikov protecting its northern flank, the Southwest Front would conduct a main attack southwest towards Starabelsk and then swing south towards Stalino and Mariupol and the Sea of Azov, hence cutting off the Germans who were expected to be withdrawing west, trying to make it back across the Dnepr. This would also recapture the whole of the Donbas area with its natural resources. But the Southwest Front was also to capture the Dnepr crossings at Dnepropetrovsk and Zaporozhye. So, as with the Voronezh Front, its effort would have to diverge, weakening the main thrust. And like STAR, there would be no operational pause.⁵¹ General Vatutin's Southwest Front was organized into four armies: 6th, 1st Guards, 3d Guards and 5th Tank; and one mobile group which took the name of its commander, Mobile Group Popov. Total combat strength was about 325,000 men and 500 tanks. 212 of these tanks were concentrated in Group Popov. The entire Front would essentially attack in single echelon. The four tank corps of Group Popov were to attack through the 6th Army and 1st Guards Army to secure objectives up to 300 kilometers deep, thus helping to cut the expected German retreat and assist in the Front's advance. The Front only held two tank corps and one cavalry corps in reserve, and even these it committed early to support the advance. The lack of operational reserves significantly restricted the Soviet ability to deal with the German counterstroke when it came. Initially, however, the Front had about a 2:1 superiority in men and a 4:1 edge in tanks, an advantage Manstein would counter by moving forces from his right to left.⁵²

Manstein Leap-frogs 1st Panzer Army

By the third week in January, the Soviet offensives had opened a 200 mile gap in Army Group B's lines from Voronezh to Voroshilovgrad. Manstein could easily recognize the danger--he had been anticipating it for weeks--and wanted to execute his plan.

". . . the time had obviously come to 'leap-frog' strong forces from the area south of the Don to the middle Donetz if the enemy were to be prevented from tying off Don Army Group and Army Group A."⁵³

After Manstein was given control of AD Fretter-Pico, hence extending his flank well westward, he offered OKH two choices on 19 January: either stop the Soviet advance in the gap between Voronezh and Voroshilovgrad in order to prevent German forces from being cut off; or assemble strong counterattack forces north and south of the gap to strike the flank of the attacking forces.⁵⁴ Manstein knew OKH could accomplish the first alternative only if it shifted significant forces from Army Group Center--there wasn't time to shift forces from any other theater--and this was unlikely. For the second alternative, Manstein would have to pull back Army Group Don to help create the necessary mobile reserve. This would also necessitate pulling forces out of the Caucasus. But Hitler was reluctant to give up the Maikop oil fields in the Caucasus and therefore would still not agree to a shift of any "strong forces."

AD Hollidt was conducting its fighting withdrawal to the Donetz. It continued to use mobile defense type tactics. An example was when it used two of its armored divisions for a spoiling attack against the enemy assembling on the Kalitva River. Manstein now ordered it to be prepared to release one armored division to stem the crisis towards the left flank.⁵⁵

On 21 January Manstein warned OKH that he had only 4 or 5 days left until he would have to shift up to two divisions from 4th Panzer Army--still south of the Don--to vicinity of Voroshilovgrad in order to protect his flank. This would mean he could not hold Rostov open.⁵⁶ Still Hitler procrastinated.

South of the Don the Russians were fighting across the Manich Canal and threatened to outflank the 4th Panzer Army on its left. Concentrating four corps on 4th Panzer Army's left flank, the Soviets punched across the Manich towards Rostov on 20 January and reached the city's airfield. The 4th Panzer Army had been using the 16th Panzer Division to delay the Soviet's progress with thrusts into their flank, but this was not sufficient to halt this new attack. At the same time the Soviets attacked the 57th Corps' front as a holding attack, thus hoping to get into its rear.

Manstein needed to relieve this pressure. He had planned to use the 7th and 11th Panzer Divisions, now with AD Hollidt, to shift to the crisis on the left flank of the Donetz. But now, faced with the more immediate problem of keeping Rostov open, he used them to strike across the Don to the south against the enemy advancing around 4th Panzer Army's left flank towards Rostov. This counterattack temporarily relieved the pressure on Rostov.⁵⁷

Finally, Hitler relented to Soviet and Manstein's pressure to release the 1st Panzer Army from the Caucasus and withdraw it through Rostov. He placed it under Manstein's command on 27 January. But even now its southern wing was 180 miles from Rostov. Therefore, 4th Panzer Army had still to be tied down south of the Don protecting its withdrawal. Manstein was now concerned whether 4th Panzer Army could be brought over to the decisive western flank in time.⁵⁸

And unfortunately, from Manstein's perspective, there now was not time to bring out all of the forces from the Caucasus with the 1st Panzer Army as would have been possible earlier. 50th Division and 13th Panzer Division were

chopped Army Group A and would remain in the Caucasus. Army Group A was to withdraw back into an enclave in the Kuban peninsula, with its back to the Sea of Azov and the Kerch Strait. Hitler rationalized that this would facilitate future German offensive operations in the Caucasus when they could once again resume, but Manstein could see that it merely prevented 400,000 German troops from playing a role in the decisive campaign on the southern front.⁵⁹

1st Conference with Hitler

In January Hitler promised Manstein that he was assembling an SS Panzer Corps vicinity Kharkov and it would provide the offensive counterstroke against the Soviet attack which Manstein needed to protect his left flank. Hitler was placing great stock in the new equipment of this corps to provide the advantage the German Army needed to regain the initiative. The Germans had not had a tank superior to those of the Russians since the latter introduced the T34 in July, 1941, catching the Germans by surprise. Still it wasn't until 1942 that Hitler approved the design for the new Panther tank and hastened the production of a heavier Tiger tank. The Panther was a medium tank of 45 tons with a long 75mm gun. The heavy Tiger weighed 56 tons and had an 88mm gun. When they were finally introduced in 1943, they did not provide the decisive results expected by Hitler.⁶⁰ In any case, Manstein reasoned that the SS Divisions Das Reich and Adolf Hitler of the new corps wouldn't be prepared to launch their attack until mid-February and he didn't believe these two divisions, far from his left flank, could effectively accomplish what was necessary. In the meantime, therefore, he kept stretching his flank further and further west.

In February the Soviet Operations GALLOP and STAR were launched and worsened the crisis. The 1st Panzer Army was withdrawing through Rostov, but snow and ice were making progress slow. Hitler on 3 February issued Operations Order 3 which planned for the new SS Corps to strike the Soviet

flank under Manstein's control. Manstein dismissed the order with his reply to OKH that he could not take control while they were so far away, that the forces were too meager to succeed, and that he had to have operational freedom to pull AD Hollidt back over 45 miles to the Mius River and withdraw 4th Panzer Army from south of the Don and Rostov to act as an operational reserve. Furthermore, on 5 February, the Southwest Front's advance to within 70 miles of the Dnepr crossings led Manstein to list several demands to OKH:

- (1) Withdraw AD Hollidt to the Mius.
- (2) Immediate preparation for an airlift in case the Dnepr crossings were cut.
- (3) Ruthless increase in resupply by rail, at the expense of other Army Groups.
- (4) Transfer of 7th Antiaircraft Division to Stalino to protect the LOC.
- (5) SS Panzer Corps to counterattack south away from Kharkov.

These demands concerned Hitler enough to fly Manstein to his headquarters for a personal interview.⁶¹

Manstein wanted to discuss two issues. First was the subject of the overall unsatisfactory command and control of German operations on the Eastern Front. Manstein envisioned Hitler appointing one Chief of Staff whom he could trust to act in his name to carry out operations in a manner more suited to the German Army, rather than exercising command himself and getting involved in daily operations, hampering all initiative at the Front. Hitler evaded the issue and of course nothing changed.

The second topic was the concept for the defense of the southern sector. Manstein tried to explain the decisive nature of the threat facing the Germans. The Soviet forces cutting their way through Army Group B's area could easily turn towards the lower Dnepr crossings or the Sea of Azov and cut off all the southern German forces. The SS Panzer Corps assembling near Kharkov could not stop this tide by itself. In addition to the withdrawal of

1st Panzer Army, 4th Panzer Army should be shifted back across the Don to the left flank to act in concert with the Panzer Corps. This required a reduction of the Donetz salient and a withdrawal west of the Mius.

Any discussion of voluntarily giving up ground was repugnant to Hitler. He argued that the enemy should be forced to pay for every foot he recaptured. By so doing, the Soviets would be worn down until their counteroffensive ground to a halt. Reducing the length of the front would also release Soviet forces which were now tied up. The Donetz basin was also important to him as a means of denying coal resources to the enemy. And from a political standpoint, Hitler feared repercussions with Turkey should he execute a large withdrawal.

Manstein countered that it was a matter of losing the Donetz basin alone, or the basin and German Army Groups. The forces available to Manstein simply were not enough to hold on to the region while attempting a rigid defense, and only by focusing on the Soviet armies could the Germans regain the initiative. Still Hitler hesitated, seemingly reluctant to accept postulates about what the enemy might accomplish on the battlefield before events clearly unfolded.

But Manstein was insistent and would not budge. After four hours of intense discussion Hitler relented and gave approval to Manstein's operational intentions, although he did ask Manstein as he was leaving to postpone his withdrawal as long as necessary, just in case an early thaw helped forestall the Soviet advance!⁶²

Although an important victory for Manstein, it was still unclear in his mind whether or not it was now too late to execute his maneuver with the 4th Panzer Army or whether AD Hollidt could pull back without being outflanked by the forces vicinity Voroshilovgrad. Arriving back at his headquarters on 7 February and finding that a suburb of Rostov had fallen again to the Soviets, he issued orders for the operational redeployment. It took until 18 February

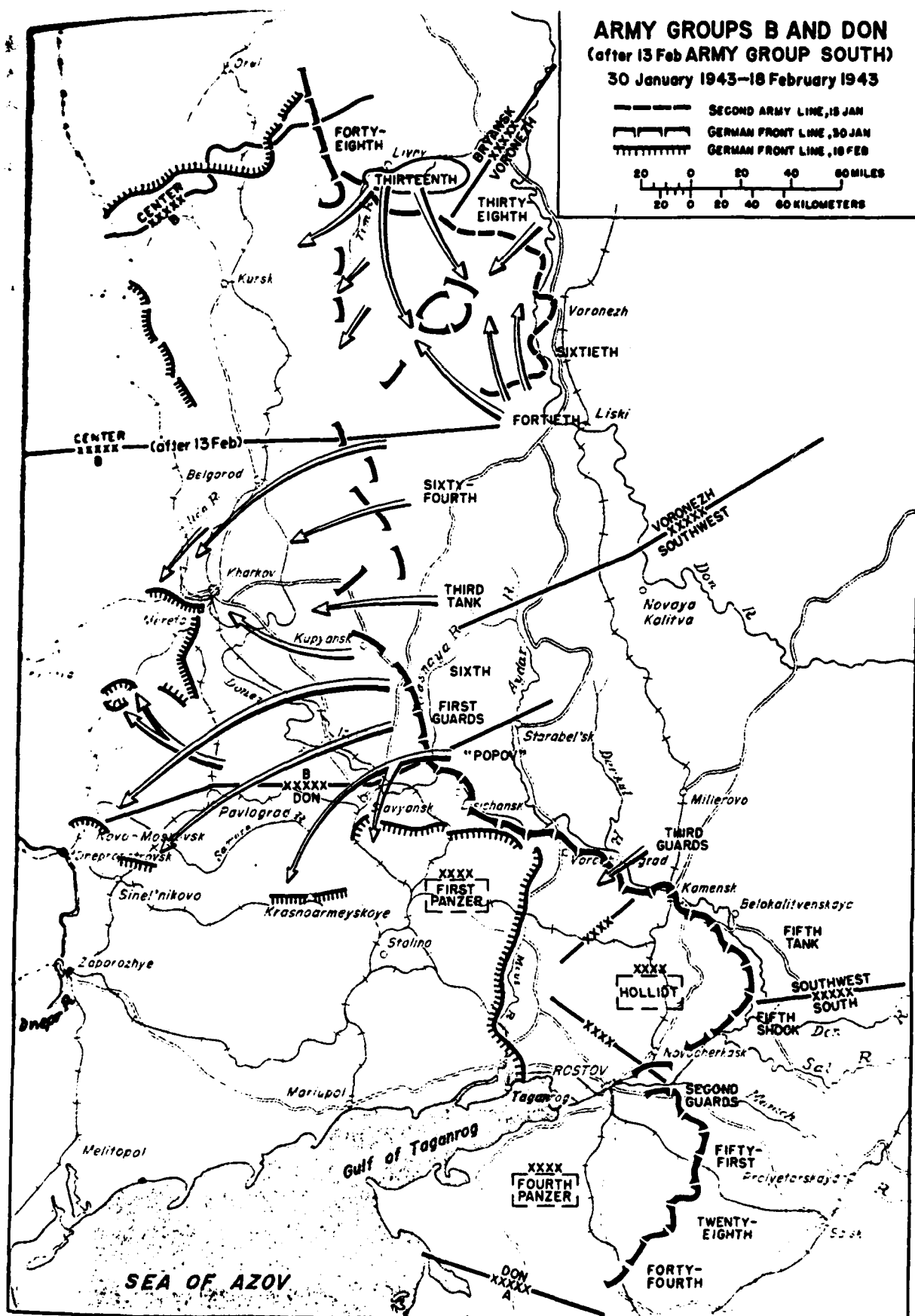
for the 4th Panzer Army and AD Hollidt to fight their way back across the Mius to positions occupied by German forces the previous winter. The withdrawal was accompanied by hundreds of thousands of refugees and civilians and also entailed as much destruction to factories and resources as the German could administer. Whether they could hold the Mius once they reached it was in question for several days. One Soviet corps crossed the river on the 18th and pushed 18 miles west before the Germans could consolidate their lines and eliminate the penetration.⁶³

Voronezh Front Takes Kharkov

Before things got better, things got worse. On Manstein's left AD Lanz was trying to hold on to Kharkov, the fourth largest city in the Soviet Union. Hitler, seemingly failing to learn the lesson of Stalingrad, declared the city a fortress and gave AD Lanz the mission to hold it at all costs. The problem, however, was that Hitler also ordered AD Lanz to use its main combat power, the two divisions of the SS Panzer Corps, to counterattack to the southwest towards Manstein's flank. The counterattack began on 11 February but was driven back to Kharkov three days later. Hitler again ordered the city held, even if the counterattack had to be called off.⁶⁴

On 13 February AD Lanz and other remnants of Army Group B, except for 2d Army which reverted to Army Group Center, were placed under Manstein's command. Army Group B was removed from the German order of battle and Army Group Don renamed Army Group South. Manstein moved his headquarters west to Zaporozhye on the Dnepr in order to better control the upcoming events which he anticipated would be decisive. The removal of Army Group B at a critical time did carry some disadvantages. It caused some confusion while Manstein reestablished communication with subordinate units. But with AD Lanz placed under his command, he now controlled all the resources necessary for synchronizing an effective counterstroke against the Soviets.⁶⁵

Manstein recommended to Hitler that AD Lanz's priority should be the counterattack and not Kharkov; the city could be recaptured later. But Kharkov had become a symbol of prestige for Hitler and he insisted the city be held. Fighting in the city on 14 and 15 February became bitter and just before the last corridor out of the city slammed shut, the last Panzer unit evacuated the city against orders and Kharkov fell to the Soviets.



(From Ziemke: Stalingrad to Berlin)

Dr. C. Brewer, Jr.

Southwest Front Surges Forward

It appeared that the Southwest Front's offensive would match the success of the Voronezh Front at Kharkov. Launched on 29 January, the attack met with immediate success, driving the Germans back to the Donetz. By 5 February Izyum on the Donetz had fallen, with the German 320th Infantry Division fighting to keep from being encircled. Stubborn resistance around the urban centers did slow 6th Army's advance.⁶⁶

The 1st Guards Army was also making progress with elements crossing the Donetz and pushing towards Slavyansk. The arrival of the German 7th and 3rd Panzer Divisions in Slavyansk as part of the 1st Panzer Army redeployment was just in time to prevent a total collapse in this sector and to begin a stubborn resistance in the urban sprawl around Slavyansk which would help wear the offensive down.⁶⁷ The first days of February saw fierce fighting around Slavyansk. More and more Soviet forces were drawn into the battle for the city which had now become a major obstacle for the 1st Guards Army. 1st Panzer Army had made the city its western anchor.⁶⁸

Popov's Mobile Group supported the attack across the Donetz towards Slavyansk. It bypassed the city and pushed on south, taking the town of Kramatorsk. But reinforcing German units had put it behind schedule, tied down its units in fighting in towns like Kramatorsk and prevented it from exploiting the penetration. German forces around Slavyansk were now organized under 40th Panzer Corps, 1st Panzer Army. Of course there still existed a huge gap between these forces and the nearest other significant German forces, the SS Panzer Corps, fighting in and south of Kharkov. 40th Corps' first priority was to hold the city and then drive Soviet forces back across the Donetz. To do this it tried to push the Soviets out of Kramatorsk and keep contact with the 7th Division in Slavyansk. It used the 11th Panzer Division, which had moved from the Caucasus by train, to attack towards Kramatovsk.⁶⁹

This type of urban fighting slowed the Southwest Front's offensive; STAVKA pressured the Front to occupy Slavyansk and restore its momentum. Group Popov was to assist 1st Guards Army at Slavyansk and also push south on Krasnoarmeyskoye and Stalino. In directives on 10 and 11 February, STAVKA reiterated the urgency of cutting the German withdrawal to the Dnepr by pressing on to the Sea of Azov. To STAVKA, it appeared the Germans were in a hectic retreat and fierce fighting at Slavyansk was only a rear guard action.⁷⁰

Group Popov aggressively forced its way further south capturing Grishino and then Krasnoarmeyskoye on 13 February. This cut a critical railway line of Army Group South running to Dnepropetrovsk. 1st Panzer Army had to counterattack. It had the 7th and 11th Panzer Divisions counterattack east from Slavyansk and then turn south into Popov's rear. SS "Viking" Division would attack west. This concentric attack hopefully would drive the Soviets out of Krasnoarmeyskoye. 1st Panzer Army refused to allow 40th Panzer Corps to abandon Slavyansk however; it was proving to be too good an 'anchor' in the Soviet offensive.

These attacks were not completely successful; this time the Soviets made use of the urban terrain they had captured. 1st Panzer called off the attacks and instead directed all units to use a more indirect approach and attack the supply lines of these extended forces, postponing another counterattack until it could reinforce the effort.⁷¹

The 1st Guards Army had much of its fighting power tied up around Slavyansk, but under pressure pushed other forces to its west and continued the drive towards Pavlogrod and then Dnepropetrovsk, receiving support from the 6th Army on its right. By 20 February Soviet Forces were only 15 miles from that critical crossing site and had cut the rail line leading from it.⁷²

1st Panzer Army finally approved the withdrawal from Slavyansk on 15 February so it could concentrate forces against Popov Group vicinity Krasnoarmeyskoye and reopen the rail link between Dnepropetrovsk and Stalino. On the 18th, serious fighting again erupted at Krasnoarmeyskoye with several German divisions converging on and encircling the city. Ironically, at this time the Front was urging Soviets at Krasnoarmeyskoye to destroy the German forces in that city and allow no German withdrawal.⁷³ There still was no appreciation that the initiative of the campaign was about to shift, and that rather than withdrawing, the Germans were counterattacking.

Chapter 6

Phase 4: The Counterstroke

The Soviet advance up to 18-20 February to within 15 miles of Dnepropetrovsk and their fighting in Krasnoarmeyskoye mark limit of their offensive. Southwest Front had seriously overextended itself and the shifting of German forces to the right places was to be just in time to make them pay the price.

Manstein's 2d Conference with Hitler

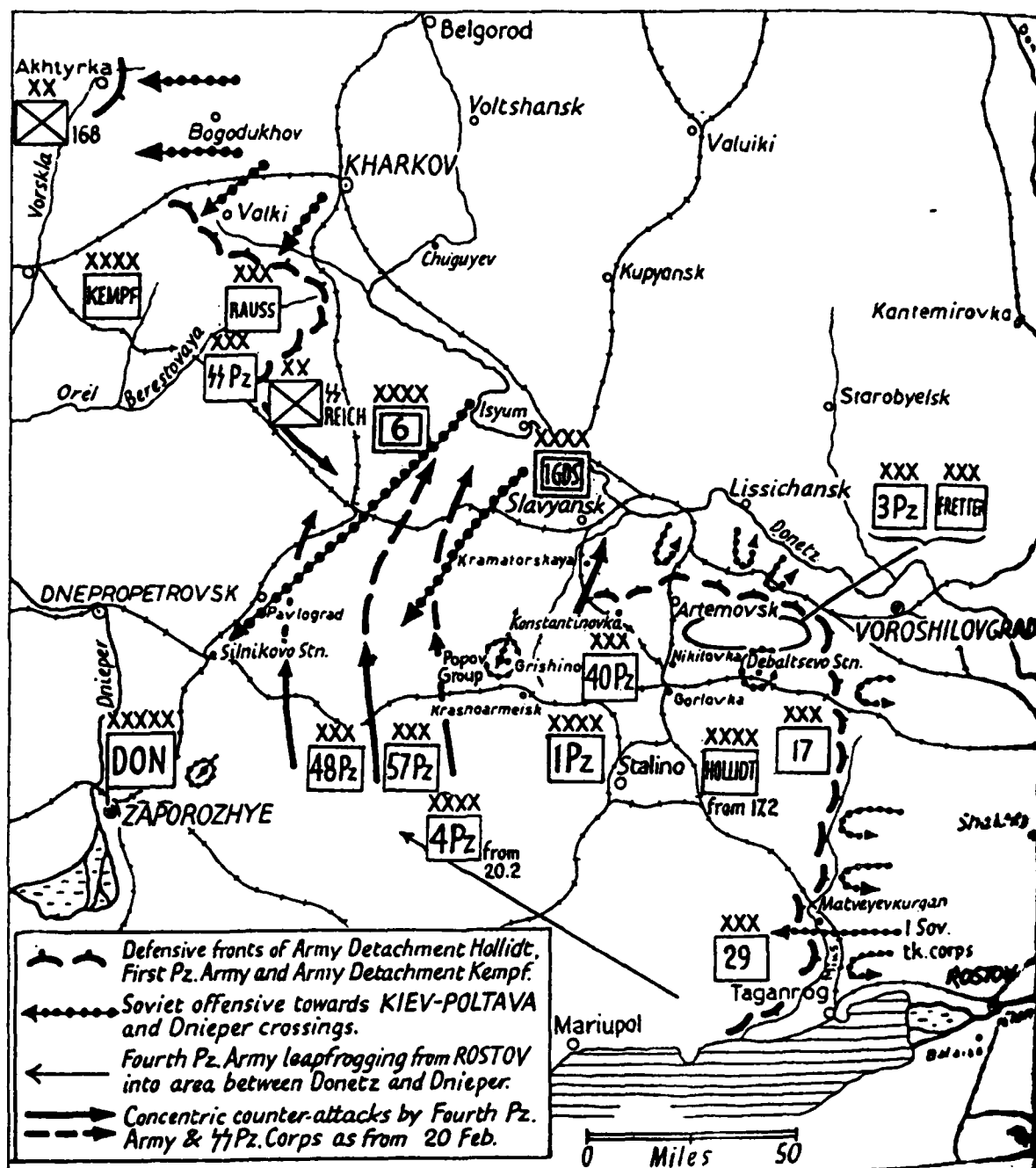
The situation was still looking critical when Hitler decided to visit Manstein at the front. He arrived at Army Group South Headquarters at Zaporozhye on 17 February. In the back of his mind he may have intended to relieve Manstein,⁷⁴ but the situation appeared too desperate for that drastic a move. The meetings from 17-19 February were critical to Manstein for receiving approval of his operational concepts.

Manstein told Hitler he proposed to forget about recapturing Kharkov, which had just been lost, and concentrate on eliminating the threat to the Dnepr crossings. SS Panzer Corps would attack southeast towards Pavlograd and act in concert with the 4th Panzer Army. Once these concentric attacks had destroyed the enemy forces threatening the Dnepr crossings, then a counterattack would be launched to recapture Kharkov. Hitler would not approve this plan. He wanted a symbolic victory for political reasons and feared Manstein's attacks would get bogged down in the mud when the snow soon thawed and hence the Germans wouldn't get back to Kharkov. Hitler insisted the attack be to recapture Kharkov. Manstein insisted that the proper sequence was first to strike the enemy forces now near Dnepropetrovsk, but he couldn't convince Hitler.⁷⁵

The next day's events changed Hitler's mind. Hitler was counting on the 'Death's Head' SS Panzer Division coming from the Kiev area to reinforce SS Panzer Corps for its effort against Kharkov. On 18 February word reached Manstein that the division was bogged down in mud and couldn't reach the Panzer Corps in time for the attack north towards Kharkov. Also, word of the loss of Pavlograd was received reinforcing Manstein's explanation of the seriousness of the threat near the Dnepr. Hitler relented and approved Manstein's operational intent. Manstein also informed Hitler that although there was still stiff fighting along the Mius front, he would have to assume greater risk there and move motorized forces to help counter the threats on his left. Before he left on the 19th, Soviet tanks were within 35 miles of the Fuehrer's airfield.⁷⁶

The Counterstroke Regains the Initiative

As if timing couldn't be better, General Hoth, commander of 4th Panzer Army arrived at Zaporozhye with his headquarters on the evening of 18 February and received Manstein's intentions. Hoth received command of SS Panzer Corps, then south of Kharkov near Krasnograd, and the 57th and 48th Panzer Corps. The latter headquarters would control the 6th and 17th Panzer divisions transferred from the Mius region. Manstein explained that while AD Hollidt would act as an economy of force, defending the front from Voroshilovgrad to the Sea of Azov, 1st and 4th Panzer Armies with its Panzer Corps would strike into the rear and flank of the advancing Soviet 6th Army, Group Popov and 1st Guards Army. 1st Panzer Army had already started its counterattacks in the Krasnoarmeyskoye area. On the left flank, SS Panzer Corps would use two of its divisions to attack south. Its third division would hold the shoulder of the Soviet penetration to the west of Kharkov, thus protecting the rear of the attacking Panzer divisions. The 48th Panzer Corps would attack from the south.⁷⁷



(From Manstein: Lost Victories)

4th Panzer Army's concentric attacks struck the Soviets with surprise and were greatly successful. SS Panzer Corps attack kicked off first and as it struck the rear of the Soviet forces advancing on the Dnepr it routed several units. After capturing the railhead at Novo-Moskovsk on 20 February it turned east towards Pavlograd. 48th Corps was attacking north to the east of Pavlograd. But 6th and 1st Guards Armies were still trying to advance. As late as 21 February, Southwest Front ordered 6th Army to push across the Dnepr and seize a bridgehead on the west of the river and push towards Zaporozhye. The Front also committed the 25th Tank Corps, representing the bulk of its reserve, in support of 6th Army. The 25th Tank Corps pushing towards Zaporozhye was cut off between 1st and 4th Panzer Army forces and literally ran out of fuel as it was encircled. Only by abandoning all their equipment did some survivors escape to the north.⁷⁸

By 24 February, the right flank of Southwest Front was badly mauled. SS Panzer Corps and 48th Panzer Corps had linked up and were now to attack side by side to the north through Lozovaya towards the Donetz. Fighting was fierce as Soviet units struggled to escape north and avoid being cut off by the German advance.

40th Panzer Corps was also having success with the overextended Popov Group. Popov's request to withdraw on the night of 20 February only earned him a scolding from the Front Commander. He was still being urged to push forward. Soon it was too late and the Group disintegrated into several encirclements with remnants fleeing north.⁷⁹

The initial phases of the counterstroke had achieved great success. Manstein ordered 1st Panzer Army to strike north towards the Donetz. Fourth Panzer was to attack towards the northeast, then turn north and attack towards Kharkov. This would catch elements of the Voronezh Front in the flank as they were still pushing west against AD Kempf which was conducting a fighting

withdrawal. As the situation deteriorated for the Southwest Front, Vatutin sent calls for Voronezh Front assistance. But it wasn't until the former was in full collapse that STAVKA ordered the latter on 28 February to wheel 3d Tank Army south and chopped it to Vatutin. But this only caught 3d Tank Army between AD Kempf, by now attacking from the west, and 4th Panzer Army attacking north, so it too was chewed up.⁸⁰

Now Manstein continued the counteroffensive towards Kharkov, deciding to strike west of the city with 4th Panzer Army in order to maintain contact with AD Kempf and still encircle the city and take it by a coup de main.⁸¹ But the lure of the prize was too great and the SS Panzer Corps against orders sent units into the city. After three days of heavy fighting the city fell to the Germans on 14 March. Remaining Soviet resistance west of the Donetz quickly collapsed. The SS Panzer Corps easily pushed to Belgorod on 18 March and retook the city in four hours; with this Manstein called the counteroffensive operation complete. He had pulled it off just in time to beat the spring thaws and was now on a front similar to one with which the Germans had started the 1942 summer campaign.

Chapter 7

Lessons Learned

Operational Level Leadership

Of the many lessons learned from an analysis of this campaign, maybe the most striking one is the decisiveness of leadership at the operational level. Therefore, the following discussion of lessons learned and their implications on today's battlefield will begin with a contrast between the operational leadership of Manstein and his Soviet rivals.

Manstein's brilliant leadership during this campaign was one of the major contributing factors to the German success. Together with his achievements in the Crimea and the designing of the operational scheme of maneuver for the 1940 Ardennes campaign, his generalship during the winter of 1942-43 earned him his reputation as one of World War II's finest operational level commanders. What aspects of his generalship were most decisive?

To begin with, Manstein had a long range vision appropriate to a commander at the operational level. The operational level of war deals with the sequencing of major battles and operations in order to achieve a theater strategic goal. Manstein's goal was the defeat of the Soviet forces on the southern wing of the Russian front. He recognized the prerequisites for the required sequencing as soon as he assumed command of Army Group Don in November. Granted, he was given the initial mission of relieving 6th Army in Stalingrad; but he saw this as incidental to the decisive nature of his larger mission. Initially, as would any other commander, he gave the relief operation first priority. However, Manstein recognized several important factors.

o The crucial element for the campaign was the focus on destruction of enemy forces in the field and not the retention of terrain, whether it be Stalingrad, Kharkov, or the Caucasus. The occupation of the terrain and the exploitation of its resources would follow the destruction of the enemy army.

o At the same time, failing to focus on the enemy forces could result in the loss of both terrain and significant German forces.

o The decisive aspect of the campaign was not the loss of 6th Army in Stalingrad, but the opportunity the Soviet counteroffensive gave the enemy potentially to cut off several additional German armies.

o Before he could defeat the enemy who now had the operational initiative, he had to avoid being cut off and defeated himself.

This may sound elementary, but it was not Hitler's vision of the campaign. Hitler's focus on retaining all captured territory, his reluctance to anticipate future enemy courses of action requiring him to make uncomfortable decisions, and his waiting to the last minute to react to the battle are examples of other ways to fight the campaign. Had Manstein followed the style of his immediate boss, he could very well have lost the campaign,

Manstein himself recognized the importance of thinking ahead:

"... the only successful military commander is the one who can think ahead. He must be able to see through the veil in which the enemy's future actions are always wrapped, at least to the extent of correctly judging the possibilities open to both the enemy and himself. The greater one's sphere of command, of course, the further ahead one must think."⁸² Manstein continually criticized his higher headquarters, OKH, for failing to plan sufficiently ahead.

Besides anticipating future enemy actions, operational vision includes the logical sequencing of friendly operations to achieve a meaningful payoff. For example, Manstein correctly argued Hitler out of using the SS Panzer Corps to

attack north to recapture Kharkov; instead he used it first to strike south into the enemy flank. In front of Rostov he correctly prioritized 4th Panzer Army's tasks first to protect the flank of 1st Panzer Army then withdrawing and only later to secure Rostov against attack; he realized that Rostov was only important for supplying 1st Panzer Army anyway.

Finally, Manstein's vision included anticipation of what he would do with the initiative when he regained it. He had to stop the enemy first, but that was only a prerequisite to resuming the offensive for decisive results.

Vision, then, at the operational level, is especially challenging when the enemy has the initiative, as the Soviets did in November 1942. But it entails being able to read the battlefield, judge what the enemy's intentions and capabilities are, and sequence your actions to achieve a decisive and favorable outcome.

A second aspect of Manstein's generalship was his 'strength of will'. A vision of the campaign at the operational level is useful only if the commander has the strength of will to execute the vision. Manstein had that strength of will. After all, realize he had to struggle not only against Soviet forces which greatly outnumbered him and had the initiative, but also against Hitler's concept of how the campaign should be fought. It is doubtful whether the Germans could have succeeded had Manstein not had the tenacity to press his convictions. Only repeated arguments with higher headquarters and the threat to resign on 4 January led to the approval to redeploy 1st Panzer Army out of the Caucasus on 27 January. At that, its divisions arrived south of the Donetz vicinity of Slavyansk just in time to stem Southwest Front's advance in that area. At the 6 February conference with Hitler, only four hours of intense debate with the Fuehrer led to the critical decision to pull back to the Mius and redeploy the 4th Panzer Army. That was just in time to

avert disaster at the Dnepr crossings later on 18 February. And at the second conference with Hitler at Zaporozhye, only two days of argument convinced Hitler to allow the SS Corps to attack south rather than north.

Many commanders would not have pressed the Fuehrer as Manstein did, considering the power that Hitler exercised over his generals. But it was only through his perserverance, this tenacious clinging to the principles Manstein believed were essential for success, that the critical decisions required for victory were made in time, giving proof of Napoleon's adage that, "If courage is the first characteristic of the soldier, perserverance is the second."⁸³

Two other interrelated aspects of Manstein's strength of will were his ability not to panic when faced with crises and his ability to assume significant risk when necessary. Without these abilities he could not have practised the style of war which he did. For example, when elements of the 25th Tank Corps approached to within miles of his headquarters he did not overreact, realizing the maneuver was incidental. As Soviet forces approached the critical Dnepr crossing at Dnepropetrovsk he didn't panic, but appreciated that the farther the Soviets advanced the more effective would be his counterstroke. This ability to maintain an iron nerve was beneficial not only because it fostered confidence, but also because it prevented knee-jerk reactions which could have detracted from the concentration of combat power at the critical time and place.

Manstein also understood the requirement to assume significant operational risks. In order to mass his armored assets for the critical battle he had to use AD Hollidt to economize force on the Mius, stripping it of armored units. On numerous other occasions he had to leave whole sectors with no German forces so as to be strong where it counted. As he himself said,⁸⁴

"... anyone who is not prepared to take such risks will never achieve decisive and--as was essential in this case--speedy results."

As important a role as Manstein's leadership played in the German success, so did the Soviet leadership influence their failures. As is often the case in military history, "For every Hannibal there must be a Varro."

Senior Soviet leaders at STAVKA and at the fronts clearly misread the battlefield and German intentions at critical times in the campaign. The redeployments of 1st and 4th Panzer armies westward, the failure of the relief operation of Stalingrad, the destruction of the Rumanian, Italian and then Hungarian armies, the subsequent loss of 6th German Army, and the intense pressure Soviet forces had been applying since the counteroffensive began all led to a conclusion the Soviet commanders wanted to believe: that the German southern wing was defeated, morally and physically. The clincher was the evacuation of Kharkov, against the direct orders of the Fuehrer, by an SS Corps no less. This appeared to confirm the perception that a strategic withdrawal was underway and that fierce fighting as in the Slavyansk area was merely a rear guard action. For these reasons the fronts were urged to carry out the operational exploitation. Forces were pushed far forward of what was prudent. But the expectation was that it was a race to the Dnepr crossings, not that these exploiting forces were going to fight against a synchronized, operational level counterattack.

Soviet commanders not only misread German intentions, but also misjudged their own subordinates' capabilities. Possibly they were too far from these forces to see the reality of the situation. But most of the Soviet divisions and corps had been in constant combat for months, were worn down mentally,

physically and materially, had begun operations GALLOP and STAR without an operational pause, and in hindsight, were soon to reach and pass their offensive culminating point.

The decision to attack in single echelon with little or no operational level reserves was another critical mistake. Both the Voronezh and Southwest Fronts suffered from their lack of operational reserves. This risk might have succeeded if the Soviets were facing a true exploitation phase, but would be disastrous if they encountered significant counterattacking forces.

The next mistake Soviet leadership made was to dissipate its combat power. In the first instance, the overall thrusts of the Voronezh and Southwest Fronts were divergent. The former was attacking west and southwest and the latter's main effort was southwest and south. Within the fronts, efforts also diverged. The Voronezh Front had armies attacking west towards Kursk and southwest towards Kharkov. The Southwest Front had main efforts towards Dnepropetrovsk in the southwest and also south through Slavyansk and Krasnoarmeyskoye towards Mariupol. At the same time, two of its other armies, 3d Guards and 5th Tank were attacking west against Manstein's economy of force, AD Hollidt.

As a result, the Soviets did not achieve mass at the critical locations and times during the campaign. Manstein commented, ". . .with the exception of Stalingrad, the Soviet command never managed to coordinate strength and speed when hitting a decisive spot."⁸⁵ There are several ways they could have achieved mass. For example, instead of Operations STAR and GALLOP both receiving strong combat strength, the former could have sacrificed more forces to the latter. Once the Southwest Front was designated the main effort, forces could have been concentrated in echelon for its singular main effort, either towards the Dnepr to capture, in turn, Dnepropetrovsk, Zaporozhye and Melitopol, or instead, in a shallower envelopment through Slavyansk, Stalino,

and Mariupol. In each instance only a holding attack needed to be launched against the Mius defenses, possibly from the South Front. In this manner of concentrating combat power for the decisive thrust, and by assuming risks in other sectors, a good possibility existed that the Soviets could have successfully cut the supply line to large numbers of German forces in Army Groups Don and A. Because of the resultant weakening of these forces, their annihilation would have followed and been easier to accomplish.

The echelonment of several armies for the main attack would also have allowed the Soviets to protect their flanks as they drove to their critical objectives. This could have turned the German doctrine 'Kesselschlacht' on its head. 'Kesselschlacht' was the term given to the practice of using operational maneuver to encircle large enemy forces and then assuming the tactical defense in order to exploit friendly firepower and the advantages of the defense as the enemy attempted to breakout, as Moltke expertly did against the French at Sedan in 1870. Once having secured the Dnepr crossings, for example, the Soviets could have assumed the tactical defensive temporarily since the Germans would have been forced to attack the Soviets in their positions to reopen their lines of communications.

All these alternatives presuppose that the Soviets understood the nature of the enemy they were fighting. But as has already been explained, they thought they were on a battlefield of exploitation and pursuit rather than on a battlefield where they had yet to defeat the enemy.

Tactical Maturity

If the difference in leadership at the operational level between the Germans and Soviets was the most significant factor in the campaign, the difference in tactical maturity was the second. To be sure, the Soviets were

constantly learning from their mistakes and from the Germans, but their maturity at the tactical level was not as consistently excellent as their enemy's.

"Tactics are the cutting edge of strategy"⁸⁶ and as such tactical ability must match operational ambitions. The Soviet counteroffensive which grew out of the Stalingrad encirclement, indeed, the encirclement itself, was bold and imaginative in scope. Had the encirclement of German forces been successful and their lines of communications cut, the results could have been decisive. But the linkage between operational art and tactics had not yet matured to the required degree. What were the mistakes at the tactical level which prevented the Soviets from achieving their operational objectives?

An example was the piecemealing of their mobile strike forces. Launching Badanov's Tank Corps on its 120 mile deep raid to Tatsinskaya enabled the Germans to encircle and destroy it. This led Stalin to coach his Front Commander, Vatutin: "In general you must bear in mind that it is better to push tank corps along extended advances in pairs, rather than singly, so as not to get into Badanov's position."⁸⁷ But essentially the same problem occurred later with the 25th Tank Corps. The Southwest Front pushed it forward when the front was already overextended and in fierce fighting. The tank corps was not adequately supported, encountered fierce opposition, ran out of fuel and was defeated. On a slightly larger scale Group Popov experienced the same problem. Subjected to concentric attacks by three panzer divisions, it was chopped up rather harshly near Krasnoarmeyskoye and had to try and fight its way north. The battles on the Chir by the Fifth Shock Army against the 48th Panzer Corps offer another example. The 11th Panzer Division's mobile defense was very successful because the Soviets gave it the opportunity to

defeat one penetration after another in detail. The 11th was successful because the Soviets piecemealed their offensive; for some reason they were not able to synchronize their combat power against the 48th.

This failure to synchronize combat power at the tactical level reflects a lack of tactical maturity the German's possessed. At the division level, 11th Panzer Division's counterattacks on the Chir area offer the perfect example. As Balck attacked one penetration after another, he managed to synchronize his regiments beautifully, using a Panzer Grenadier Regiment to block or as a holding attack and swinging his Panzer Regiment into the flank and rear of each Soviet force. At a higher level, Hoth's synchronization of five panzer divisions of the SS and 40th Panzer Corps in the attack north after recapturing Pavlograd is another example of what the Germans could do at the tactical level.

Agility

The differential between German and Soviet agility also had an impact on the outcome of the campaign. FM 100-5 defines agility as the ability of friendly forces to act faster than the enemy. It requires the continuous reading of the battlefield, the willingness to act on incomplete information, rapid decision making and issue of orders and units physically and mentally capable of rapid reorientation and movement.

This battlefield agility results not only from the physical characteristic of the units involved, but also from their state of mind. German staffs and commanders were trained to rely on the personal initiative of leaders on the battlefield. Without this 'Auftragstaktik'--this personal initiative of subordinate leaders without the reliance on long, detailed orders--large forces could not demonstrate agility. German commanders recognized this ability. Mellenthin said that Manstein's strength "lay in the superior training of his junior commanders and their capacity for independent action and leadership."⁸⁸ Manstein himself said,

"It has always been the special forte of German military leadership that it relies on commanders at all levels to show initiative and willingness to accept responsibility and does everything in its power to promote such qualities."⁸⁹

As discussed earlier, Hitler's style of command and control was contrary to this philosophy and hampered German agility at the operational level. He reserved for himself authority for many of the moves Manstein would have otherwise made earlier in the campaign. Despite the handicaps imposed by Hitler's restrictive style of command and control, Manstein was able repeatedly to concentrate strength against enemy weakness. His boldness at the operational level would have had less effect if his units and subordinate leaders not been able to act quickly, shifting their main effort when necessary. The movement of the 11th Panzer Division back and forth during the

battles on the Chir offer an example of the agility of the Germans at the tactical level. Indeed it is amazing to follow this one division from its Chir battles, to its movement west to recapture Tatsinyaka, then its move east across the Don to support 4th Panzer Army and finally its deployment west to play a part in the counteroffensive. At the operational level, it was the similar agility of German units and leaders which allowed Manstein to shift first the 1st Panzer and then the 4th Panzer Army to support his counteroffensive. It was agility which allowed the SS Panzer Corps to assume offensive action south soon after being on the defensive and being hastily evacuated from Kharkov.

Operational Initiative

This campaign is an excellent example of how to make the transition from the operational defensive to the operational offensive. Manstein made the transition by first wresting the operational initiative away from the enemy. It is important to recognize that the defender may or may not have the initiative; it depends on how he decides to execute the defense. Let us first discuss the meaning of initiative and then apply it to this campaign.

Initiative in FM 100-5 means setting or changing the terms of the battle by action.⁹⁰ When applied to individuals, it implies a style of fighting which encourages a willingness to act independently within the framework of the higher commander's intent and with audacity, violent execution and in anticipation of likely enemy courses of action. Operational initiative, on the other hand, connotes the concept of one side setting the terms of the battle. Depending on the situation, either the defender or attacker may be setting the terms of the battle.

At the beginning of this campaign the Soviets were on the operational offensive; they also had the operational initiative. They were setting the terms for the campaign. At the operational level they were forcing the

Germans to react to their intentions. Manstein was on the operational defensive. Although the Germans frequently used the tactical offensive, as with their counterattacks in the Chir battles, Manstein did not have the means at the operational level to exercise operational initiative.

During January and February a transition occurred. While still on the operational defensive, Manstein began to seize the operational initiative. This was gained through the cumulative effect of German successes and Soviet errors at the tactical level, and by Manstein's creation and deployment of his operational reserves; his panzer forces. At some time in the campaign, while still on the overall defensive, he began to set the terms of battle. The operational initiative was his; yet he still was on the overall defensive. His forces were counterattacking the flanks of the enemy and beating the enemy so badly that the "initiative" of the campaign shifted to the Germans. Manstein began to set the terms of battle. The Soviets began to react to his forces. For example, 3rd Tank Army shifted to Southwest Front. Initiative at the operational level can be thought of as "momentum" in football; either the defense or offense can gain the momentum, but he who holds it sets the terms of the game.

Manstein next exploited the initiative by transitioning to the operational offensive. 1st and 4th Panzer Armies attacked towards the Donetz and Kharkov. This is also an essential point. Just as a defender may or may not have the initiative, a commander with the initiative may or may not exercise it to go on the offensive. Meade at Gettysburg and McClellan at Antietam had the initiative after the battles and did not assume offensive action, whereupon they immediately lost it.

In summary, Manstein's generalship demonstrates how to take the initiative away from the attacker, beat him up severely while on the defensive, then continue to exploit the initiative by transitioning to the offensive.

In retrospect, this campaign confirms two important points made by Clausewitz. First, "(the defense is) simply the more effective form of war: a means to win a victory that enables one to take the offensive after superiority has been gained."⁹¹ Second, "A sudden powerful transition to the offensive--the flashing sword of vengeance--is the greatest moment for the defense."⁹²

Depth

FM 100-5 defines depth as the extension of operations in space, time and resources. Manstein began with no operational reserves, so initially he could not deploy his resources in depth. He was forced to shift his forces laterally across the operational battlefield, as he expertly did with 1st and 4th Panzer Armies. He needed time to accomplish this and the space available in the theater of operations gave him that time he needed to maneuver. But space was not an important factor merely because there was a lot of it for Manstein; it was only important because Manstein made excellent use of it. There were two especially important ways he made effective use of space and hence created depth to his battlefield. The first was by tenaciously holding on to key terrain which would form the shoulders for his counterattacks and provide coherence for his defense. This campaign offers a good example of the importance for a defender of holding a shoulder when he hopes to transition to the offense later with counterattacks. It offers the defender some opportunity to shape the battlefield.

The STAR and GALLOP operations opened the German front in several places. The front became very fluid with both German and Soviet forces being encircled at different places at the same time. Although Manstein would have liked to shape the battlefield, he did not have sufficient forces to block all Soviet penetrations; to create a 'bag', with him holding the bottom, so to speak. It has been discussed how he argued with Hitler to develop the reserve forces he

needed to hold the bag. But in the meantime, not all his forces were withdrawing. In certain critical areas, they were holding onto critical terrain tenaciously.

An example was the shoulder to which 1st Panzer Army clung, although there were few forces between it and AD Kempf near Kharkov. This shoulder can be envisioned by a line running north from Krasnoarmeyskoye to Slavyansk and then east to Voroshilovgrad. This was the right shoulder of Manstein's defense. It not only allowed him to protect the left flank of AD Hollidt, but also created some coherence to his defense. The defense can't be totally fluid. After Manstein defeated Group Popov in the battles around Krasnoarmeyskoye and Slavyansk, this shoulder provided him an excellent base from which to launch the counterattack north.

Manstein's left shoulder can be thought of as provided by AD Kempf. Although the SS Panzer Corps was pushed out of Kharkov, the Germans still retained enough ground to the west and southwest to give Manstein some coherence on his left flank. When the SS Panzer Corps launched its counterattack south, Manstein still had the 167th and 320th Infantry Divisions, one regiment of the SS Panzer Division "Totenkopf" and the SS Panzer Division "Liebstandarte Adolph Hitler" hold that shoulder between Kharkov and Krasnograd, serving as a base for his offensive operations.

In summary, although there was a 100 mile gap between 1st Panzer Army and AD Kempf, Manstein's ability to hold these two shoulders anchored his defense, provided some coherence to the battlefield, and helped secure his flanks as he launched his subsequent counterattacks.

The second factor in helping Manstein achieve depth was the effect of urban fighting. Most thoughts of battle on the southern Russian front portray conflict on the wide open steppes. While there was plenty of that type of terrain, a significant amount of combat focused around urban centers. Not only did roads and rail lines converge at some key cities, but because of the intense cold of the Soviet nights and the virtual impossibility of spending nights in the open, units tended to cluster around villages. And so fighting around urban centers had its influence on the campaign.

Both the Voronezh and Southwest Fronts' advances were disrupted by forces getting wrapped up in urban fighting. Vatutin's Southwest Front was doing well as it pushed across the Don. But then it got tangled in the more densely populated area defined by the Slavyansk-Artemovsk-Voroshilovgrad line. The fighting in Slavyansk was especially fierce. Even Popov's mobile group, advancing in the first echelon, got attrited in this fighting; and when elements broke out to the west and south they were weaker and unsupported.

The Voronezh Front experienced similar problems. The Germans made good use of small urban areas to disrupt the advance. The fight for Belgorod lasted for three days. 3d Tank Army attempted to bypass Kharkov but did not have sufficient forces. It and its reinforcements again lost time and combat power taking the city.

The cumulative effect of the urban fighting was to wear down Soviet combat power and slow down the advance. The former made them more susceptible to later German counterattacks. The latter gave Manstein just enough time to redeploy his reserve forces.

Center of Gravity and Operational Art

One of the lessons to be learned from an analysis of this campaign is a clearer understanding of the concept of "center of gravity" at the operational level of war and its relationship to operational art.⁹³ Clausewitz describes the center of gravity as:

"the hub of all power and movement, on which everything depends. That is the point against which all our energies should be directed."⁹⁴

FM 100-5 goes on to state that "the concept of centers of gravity is the key to all operational design." It is that, which if destroyed "unbalances the entire structure, producing a cascading deterioration in cohesion and effectiveness which may result in a complete failure, and which will invariably leave the force vulnerable to further damage." And "The center of gravity of an armed force refers to those sources of strength or balance. . . . Its attack is--or should be--the focus of all our operations. . . ." At the operational level it can be "--the mass of the enemy force, the boundary between two of its major combat formations, a vital command and control center, or perhaps its logistical base or lines of communications." "Finally, it should be remembered that while attacking the center of gravity may be the surest and swiftest road to victory, it will rarely be the easiest road. More often than not, the enemy recognizing his center of gravity will take steps to protect it, and indirect means will be required to force him to expose it to attack. In the process, the enemy will do his best to uncover and attack our own."⁹⁵

Identification of the enemy and your centers of gravity are essential parts of the operational art of war. Operational art can be considered as

first, identifying that component or part of the enemy, more vital than others, (his center of gravity), which if destroyed can produce the most decisive effect. Second, determining how to get at that center of gravity; i.e., determining the sequence of events which if successfully arranged will destroy that center of gravity and determining what resources are needed to produce that sequence of events. Third, determining how to prevent the enemy from getting to your center of gravity while you get to his.

If you only focus on the latter part of this sequence, i.e., if you only try to avoid losing, you are condemned to a defensive struggle void of the hope of decisive success. Here, then, is where we see Manstein's genius for the operational art. Although he began the campaign on the operational defensive and without the initiative and although his immediate concern in December and January was the prevention of his own army's destruction, Manstein sought to produce the conditions for a decisive victory.

What did Manstein consider to be the Soviet center of gravity in this theater of operations? Unfortunately, in his memoirs he did not write in terms of a center of gravity. But it is clear that he thought along the same lines as Napoleon, who once said:

"There are in Europe many good generals, but they see too many things at once. I see only one thing, namely the enemy's main body. I try to crush it, confident that secondary matters will then settle themselves."⁹⁶

Manstein's long range focus was on the destruction of the enemy forces; not instead on the retention of terrain, or a river line, or Kharkov or Stalingrad. His vision was oriented on the enemy army's destruction. This was the only way towards a decisive victory.

He recognized that only by shortening his front and economizing in certain sectors could he produce the concentration of armored combat power necessary for decisive results (and also produce a coherent defense). He correctly sequenced events by leap-frogging First and Fourth Panzer Armies to the decisive region of the campaign, establishing the Mius River defensive line, and then directing the counterattacks where they were most decisive. It is significant to note that with his sequencing of events Manstein was successful in achieving two of the principles of war, mass and surprise. The principle of mass "suggests that superior combat power must be concentrated at the decisive place and time in order to achieve decisive results."⁹⁷ The principle of surprise "results from going against an enemy at a time and/or place or in a manner for which he is unprepared" and with surprise "success out of proportion to the effort expended may be obtained."⁹⁸ It was principally because of Manstein's success in achieving surprise and superior combat power at the decisive time and place which enabled him to regain the initiative from the Soviets.

Finally, he prevented his own defeat while striving for an operational victory. His LOCs were his points of vulnerability and presented the Soviets an opportunity for decisive success. Manstein anticipated that a successful Soviet thrust either to the Dnepr crossings or thorough Krasnoarmeyskoye to the Sea of Azov would decisively affect his armored formations which represented his center of gravity. He therefore ensured that as he sought a decisive victory, he prevented the Soviets from being successful in their aims.

From the Soviet perspective, the explanation for their failure can also be described within the context of the relationship of the center of gravity and operational art. Because the Soviets judged the German forces to be

operationally defeated and in retreat, their focus turned almost exclusively on cutting the LOCs, i.e., on German points of vulnerability and not on the German center of gravity. But because Manstein's center of gravity was his armored formations and because these had not been defeated, the Soviet failure to pin them down or otherwise deal with them adequately proved fatal.

In summary, the essence of operational art is to identify the enemy center of gravity, determine the sequence of events and resources required to destroy that center of gravity, and simultaneously prevent the enemy from destroying your center of gravity. Manstein was successful in accomplishing this while the Soviets were not.

Chapter 8

Implications

If "History is Blind" and the conditions which governed the adversaries in this campaign may never duplicate themselves again, then why study this campaign? The answer is simply that the study of this campaign is a study of the art of war practiced at the operational level by someone who was a genius at it; and there is hardly any subject about the art of war which can't be reflected upon within the context of this campaign. Hopefully, by focusing on some of the aspects of the campaign which were significant then and are germane today, we should have a better understanding of the theory of war applied to a practical situation. Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to study the implications of the lessons learned from this campaign analysis. The implications will be discussed against a backdrop of a NATO Central European environment because that most closely parallels the conditions of this campaign.

We should first compare and contrast conditions on Manstein's battleground with those found in NATO today. The allies in NATO will begin the next conflict on the operational defensive, just as Manstein. They will be outnumbered in men and tanks, as was Manstein. And similarly, they will be pressured to defend forward. Because 30% of the population and 25% of the industry of West Germany is within 100 kilometers of the International German Border (IGB),⁹⁹ the NATO strategy articulated in NATO MC 14/3 includes the requirement for a forward defense. This implies an unstated requirement for a continuous defense along the entire IGB and places a constraint on the operational commander, which, while not exactly analogous to Hitler's" not one

step backward", must still be viewed as an operational handicap similar to Manstein's. A fourth similarity between Manstein and today's AFCEC commander is the command of combined allied forces. This was a handicap to Manstein because it provided his enemy with points of vulnerability to attack. This is not the same handicap the AFCEC commander faces today, but when you have eight allied corps on line along the IGB, representing at least five separate nations, you must recognize that this represents a handicap to achieving unity of effort as contrasted with the example of commanding a uni-national force.

There are four significant differences between the situation in NATO and that faced by Manstein. Space is the most striking. Manstein had much more room to maneuver. For example, the Soviet attempt to envelop him on his left flank would extend approximately from the IGB through Belgium, and as mentioned above, that space is denied the operational commander. The second is in tactical and operational maturity. The Germans enjoyed an advantage over the Soviets in both tactical and operational maturity from 1941 to midway through 1943. The Soviets were not prepared to fight a modern, mechanized war at a blitzkrieg pace at the start of World War II. Stalin's purges, the lack of depth in leadership positions, the experience the Germans gained in the Polish and French campaigns, and the fact that the Soviet combat formations had not yet evolved into effective combined arms combat forces all contributed to the German edge at the tactical level. Their tactical disadvantage handicapped the Soviets at the operational level. In addition, the Soviets had not yet learned the art of coordinating multi-front operations. Their failures in the early years provided them with valuable experience and they corrected this deficiency in the last two years of the war with Germany and in Manchuria against Japan. Hence, the armies that would face each other today

in a NATO conflict are much more evenly matched in terms of tactical and operational maturity. It has to remain to be proved whether either side can gain an advantage in its application of tactics or operational art.

A third significant difference is in the composition of forces. Both Soviet and NATO armed forces have evolved into totally mechanized and combined arms formations. Tanks are found supporting the infantry as well as with exploiting armored heavy forces. The density of tanks in organizations is now much greater since a U.S. division today may have up to 300 tanks compared to some Panzer divisions in this campaign which had been attrited down to 25 to 50 tanks.

The fourth significant difference is that the Soviets will not be attacking NATO in a single echelon without operational reserves.

Considering these similarities and differences, which of the lessons learned from Manstein's campaign apply on the NATO battlefield? It may be useful to put them in terms of the tenets of AirLand Battle Doctrine as applied to a possible attack scenario against NATO.

Initiative and Agility

AirLand Battle Doctrine emphasizes the importance of seizing the initiative from the enemy. It already has been mentioned that NATO will begin without the operational initiative. The enemy will choose the timing and location of his main attack. He not only outnumbers NATO throughout the theater, but he can exacerbate the dilemma by economizing at locations of his choosing in order to concentrate even more combat power at his points of penetration. Reflecting back to the Stalingrad encirclement, the Soviets achieved superior force ratios on the wings of their double envelopment where they exploited weaker allies even though they had less than an overall ratio

across the front of about 1.5 to 1. To accomplish this, they reduced their forces and assumed risks at some locations near Stalingrad where they did not expect the Germans to attack.

We should expect the Soviets to plan a similar type offensive against NATO. It is essential to realize that there will not be a uniform attack all across the front and that the Soviets will have the choice of the axis of main advance. For example, if the Soviets identify V and VII Corps as a center of gravity, they might attempt a strategic encirclement by economizing against these U.S. forces and concentrating their combat power on the more vulnerable wings, attacking on the left through Austria and on the right against the Belgian and British corps in NORTHAG.

This scenario is similar enough to that faced by Manstein to draw the following conclusion. Manstein demonstrated something very important-you can achieve victory even though you are forced to react to the enemy's plan. There is a tendency in some of the literature today to think that you can't succeed if you are reacting to the enemy-that to succeed you must get the enemy to react to your operational plan. For example:

"The enemy division, army or front commander has to be attacked mentally. He must be manipulated to shape his plan so friendly forces can either destroy or defeat him."¹⁰⁰

In a recent study on the subject of Deep Attack it was written that: "The objective of the Corps' defensive effort is to force the enemy to alter the Army attack plan." The enemy commander is to be caused to shift the point of the main attack by being deceived that his attack is achieving success somewhere else.¹⁰¹

The intent here is to gain an advantage over the enemy by forcing him to react to unexpected situations. However, there is a subtle but important point to understand. By definition, having the initiative means setting the terms of battle. The enemy is starting out with the initiative and he will be setting the terms of battle. Just as Manstein did, NATO commanders will have to achieve success while reacting to the enemy. It could be a futile and costly mistake to be focusing on trying to get the enemy to change his plan of battle, when a more realistic goal would be to defeat his plan. Manstein demonstrated this is possible. Once the enemy's plan is thwarted, the initiative will shift to the NATO defenders, and at the operational level the enemy will begin to react to NATO's actions. But this will only happen after NATO achieves early successes, successes achieved while the enemy is still attempting to execute his plan.

Manstein was not Hannibal at Cannae. In that battle, Hannibal chose to go on the defensive. But he had the initiative from the start. He was forcing the Romans to react to his plan and it worked perfectly, ending in history's classic battle of annihilation. But history finds an example like Cannae every 1000 years or so. Manstein's example appears the more likely case for NATO in the scenario described above, where NATO will clearly be forced to react to the enemy's early initiative. We must concede having to react to the enemy's plan, at least until, through the cumulative effect of many tactical successes, we begin to deny him the success required for him to continue his design. This can be accomplished by reading the battlefield, anticipating the enemy's actions and correctly reacting with the offensive spirit espoused in FM 100-5.

It cannot be accomplished, however, unless the defender has operational agility, and NATO may have less than Manstein. Because Manstein lacked operational reserves, he was forced to shift significant forces laterally across the battlefield. He moved panzer divisions, corps and armies, and shifted forces from one headquarters to another. Can a NATO operational commander achieve the same degree of agility? Probably not. Despite the emphasis we place on the subject of agility, several factors combine to make it much more difficult for today's operational commander to achieve operational agility.

The first deals with the evolution of our force design since World War II. Our organizations have evolved so that today's armored division is much larger and has about three times as many vehicles as Manstein's Panzer divisions (and more than twice as many as Patton's). With over 5200 vehicles in an AOE armored division, it could require from 500 to 700 kilometers of road space just to spread it out.¹⁰² More vehicles require more logistical support, and we have logistical support in the division to sustain it in combat. As a result, the agility of a division is closer to the speed of a DISCOM than of an armored brigade. The corps has changed, also. Manstein's corps were tactical headquarters used to control two or more divisions or other formations. Today's corps have evolved into larger organizations and have replaced the functional responsibility of World War II's field armies. As a result, it is more difficult to achieve operational agility. This is especially true in NATO, where we have multi-national corps on line. Sustainment and logistical support is a national responsibility. Therefore, when the operational commander wants to shift combat power laterally across

the battlefield, he cannot just move combat formations and tactical headquarters rapidly. He must move much larger formations, complete with their own logistical support.

The problem is exacerbated because NATO's enemy today has much more mobility than did Manstein's enemy. Hence, Manstein had more time to react than NATO's operational commanders will have.

A final factor handicapping the agility of today's commanders is the increase in size of staffs due to the proliferation of information they now attempt to master. Corps' staffs in NATO have grown to over 1000 personnel. Command in the corps of Manstein's army was a streamlined process between the commander and chief of staff. A select group of officers trained in the general staff system filled out the compact German headquarters and contributed to this rapid decision making.¹⁰³ Duplicating that rapid decision making process with larger staffs will be a greater challenge.

In summary, even though we have gained agility at the tactical level with the development of the M-1 and M-2, that agility doesn't automatically translate to the operational level. The problem is not as severe with the attacker, who has the operational initiative, as with the defender, who in the early stages of the campaign will be forced to react to the locations of the enemy's main attack. We have developed a doctrine of how to fight, but we have inherited organizations whose force design has evolved independently of that doctrine and in fact may not be ideally suited to execute that doctrine in a NATO scenario. Organizational flaws are limiting our ability to take advantage of the agility that technology now offers. Because we seldom maneuver across operational type distances with large formations in peacetime training exercises we don't recognize we are facing this problem.

There are several implications of this dilemma. The importance of strategic reserves is heightened because of the increased challenge of shifting large size forces laterally across the NATO battlefield. We must also get away from the mindset of thinking we can defend everywhere. Even within the framework of a strategic forward defense the operational commander must assume significant risks, just as Manstein did, in order to take the initiative away from an enemy who also has superiority in numbers. We must also be careful not to be so overly aggressive that we attack in locations which the enemy has chosen for economy of force. Not only will we not be able to mass where the decisive action may take place, but we may be assisting his operational designs.

All this makes reading the battlefield especially important. Manstein was fortunate in that he had a relatively simple task of anticipating the enemy's intentions, since his battlefield's decisive points were rather obvious to his enemy. NATO's operational commanders will have a tougher task, but it will be no less important.

In order to mass combat power, Manstein concentrated his armored forces. Having discussed how the operational agility of divisions and corps today may be closer to the agility of DISCOMs and COSCOMs than to the speed of tanks, we should be viewing attack helicopter formations as Manstein viewed his armored formations. In the event of crises, and we should expect crises at the operational level given the above scenario, we should plan to mass aviation assets from several corps at the decisive point and time. We are just beginning to think of Combat Aviation Brigades (CABs) as maneuver units. Once we make this mental breakthrough, there is no reason why we shouldn't concentrate two or three CABs at the decisive point on the battlefield.

Having accepted this philosophy, we can design our organizations and logistical support to make it possible. The quick shifting of CABs from one Army Group to another can represent the essence of operational agility on the future battlefield; it is this type of agility that is needed when the enemy has the operational initiative.

Synchronization

Another implication of this campaign study is that synchronization today will be more of a challenge for NATO commanders than for Manstein. FM 100-5 describes synchronization as ". . . the arrangement of battlefield activities in time, space and purpose to produce relative combat power at the decisive point."¹⁰⁴ To understand today's problem, compare the challenge Balck, a division commander, had in synchronizing his combat power with today's commanders. A battalion commander can have more tanks than Balck's division had in any of the Chir battles. Battalion, brigade and division commanders have at their disposal significantly more systems and activities to synchronize than did Balck. What we have is a significant increase in the number of variables commanders are asked to master.

Tactical commanders have to orchestrate these variables over larger distances now than ever before. Consider that Napoleon's divisions and corps engaged their enemy across distances of a kilometer or so. Balck could be thought of as manipulating his regiments to engage his enemy within a kilometer. Now battalion task force commanders will begin to engage their enemy with direct fires out to three kilometers. With today's mechanized forces the enemy will close much quicker than ever before. And today's forces have significantly more firepower at lower levels than ever before. In summary, commanders junior to Balck have more variables to orchestrate, more

firepower to bring to bear on the enemy, have a span of control covering greater distances, engage the enemy at a greater distance and have the enemy close on them at greater speeds. We call the way they orchestrate their assets synchronization. Well, clearly, synchronization at the tactical levels will be a greater challenge for our leaders than ever before. When we consider the advantage Balck's excellent leadership gave the Germans at the tactical level, it seems we are underestimating the impact of leadership on the orchestration of this combat power. If we valued it appropriately, then we should have matched the evolution of the combat organization since World War II with a parallel change in our approach to leadership positions. Our leader to combat power ratio has significantly decreased. We need more experienced leadership at the battalion and brigade levels, or alternatively, we need to design our organizations so that they fall within the capabilities of our leaders. This is analogous to our attempt to make the tank platoon more effective by reducing the number of tanks from 5 to 4. However, much more needs to be done in this regard in adjusting the design of our battalions, brigades and divisions.

The challenge of synchronization at the operational level has also increased as contrasted against Manstein's campaign, predominately because, unlike Manstein, NATO must synchronize its activities against strategic and operational 2nd echelons as well as the Soviet 1st echelon forces. Furthermore, air power will play a more important role on the three dimensional NATO battlefield than it did on Manstein's. The synchronization of this great asset is yet at the ideal state. Despite Army and Air Force efforts in working together on joint doctrine, e.g., with the General Operating Procedures for Joint Attack of the Second Echelon (J-SAK),

fundamental differences still exist regarding joint planning levels, air apportionment and the air and ground component structure. These differences impact on the operational commander's ability to effectively synchronize air and land combat power.¹⁰⁵ For the scope of this paper, it is sufficient to conclude that synchronization at both the tactical and operational levels will be more difficult than it was in Manstein's Campaign.

Depth

We have seen the importance of depth on the battlefield, especially to the operational commander who doesn't have the initiative. What are the implications considering that NATO commanders do not have the operational depth Manstein did? AirLand Battle Doctrine postulates the use of deep operations as a way to extend the battlefield. While this is true, not enough attention has been given to vulnerabilities in the rear areas. NATO commanders will face more serious challenges in their rear areas than did Manstein because of their lack of operational depth. Without as much depth behind the brigade rear boundaries our logistics support assets are much more vulnerable than were Manstein's. Since it requires more ammunition and fuel to sustain the force today, this presents the attacker with larger, more vulnerable targets closer to his points of penetration. Soviet airborne and airmobile assets which did not play a role against Manstein but are available today also exacerbate the challenge. Clearly we should be focusing more attention on the survivability of assets in our rear, but any analysis of our CSS units will show steady decreases in these unit's armaments, little time devoted during training for tactical survivability as compared to technical

proficiency, and even a rear area doctrine which places responsibility for countering significant threats with combat forces (most of which will be committed in combat already).

The implication is clear that there are numerous factors combining to make the challenge of practicing the tenets of Airland Battle Doctrine for today's operational commanders even greater than that faced by Manstein. We should continually be asking ourselves whether our present combat organizations are best taking advantage of technology and also whether they are capable of carrying out the doctrine with which we will fight our next war.

¹ Erich von Manstein, Lost Victories, edited and translated by A. G. Powell (Novato, California: Presidio Press, 1982), p. 13. In his forward of Manstein's memoirs, Captain B. H. Liddell Hart writes that the general verdict among the German generals he interviewed in 1945 was that Manstein was a military genius, proved himself the ablest commander and had "a superb sense of operational possibilities and an equal mastery in the conduct of operations."

² Carl von Clausewitz, On War, edited and translated by M. Howard and P. Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 358.

³ Ibid., p. 357.

⁴ Manstein, op.cit., p. 367.

⁵ Ibid., p. 369.

⁶ Fredrick Schulz, Reverses on the Southern Wing (1942-1943), German Manuscript Series T-15 (HQs, US Army Europe: Historical Division, undated), p. 48.

⁷ Manstein, op.cit., p. 294.

⁸ Ibid., p. 375.

⁹ Ibid., p. 327.

¹⁰ David M. Glantz, From the Don to the Dnepr: A Study of Soviet Offensive Operations, Dec 1942 - Aug 1943 (Unpublished Draft Study, U.S. Army War College, 1984), p. 15.

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 101-105.

¹² Manstein, op.cit., p. 374.

¹³ Ibid., p. 382.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 383.

¹⁵ Earl F. Ziemke, Stalingrad to Berlin: The German Defeat in the East, (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, U.S. Army, 1984), p. 22.

¹⁶ Battelle, Armored Warfare in World War II: Conference Featuring F. W. von Mellethin, May 10, 1979 under Contract No. DAAK 40-78-C-0004 (Columbus, Ohio: Battelle Columbus Laboratories Tactical Technology Center, 1979), p. 16. Hereafter cites as Battelle, von Mellethin.

¹⁷ Ziemke, op. cit., pp. 57-58.

¹⁸ John Erickson, The Road to Berlin: Continuing the History of Stalin's War with Germany, (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1983), pp. 2-5. Erickson presents a good summary of the decision to stay.

¹⁹ Ziemke, op. cit., p. 58.

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- 23 Ibid. p. 63.
- 24 Luftwaffe Field Divisions were ground combat units formed at the insistence of Goring. Their force structure, manning and resupply of end items were managed by the Luftwaffe.
- 25 An Armored Corps in the Soviet Army in 1942 might consist of two or three rank regiments.
- 26 Battelle, von Mellenthin, pp. 77-78.
- 27 Ibid., pp. 80-81.
- 28 Glantz, op. cit., pp. 13-45.
- 29 Manstein, op. cit., p. 375.
- 30 Ziemke, op. cit., p. 69.
- 31 Harold W. Coyle. "Tatsinskaya and Soviet OMG Doctrine," Armor, Vol. XCIV, No. 1, Jan-Feb '85, pp. 33-38. Coyle discusses this deep raid and the lessons learned and applied by the Soviets in the formulation of their OMG Doctrine.
- 32 Erickson, op. cit., p. 21.
- 33 Glantz, op. cit., pp. 87-88.
- 34 Manstein, op. cit., p. 377.
- 35 Ibid., p. 377.
- 36 Ziemke, op. cit., p. 71.
- 37 Manstein, op. cit., p. 378.
- 38 Ibid., pp. 379-380.
- 39 Glantz, op. cit., p. 459.
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- 41 Manstein, op. cit., p. 385.
- 42 Ibid., p. 386.
- 43 Ibid., p. 386.
- 44 Ziemke, op. cit., p. 75.
- 45 Manstein, op. cit., p. 389.

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- 47 Glantz, op. cit., pp. 101-102.
- 48 Ibid., p. 180.
- 49 Ibid., pp. 181-185.
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